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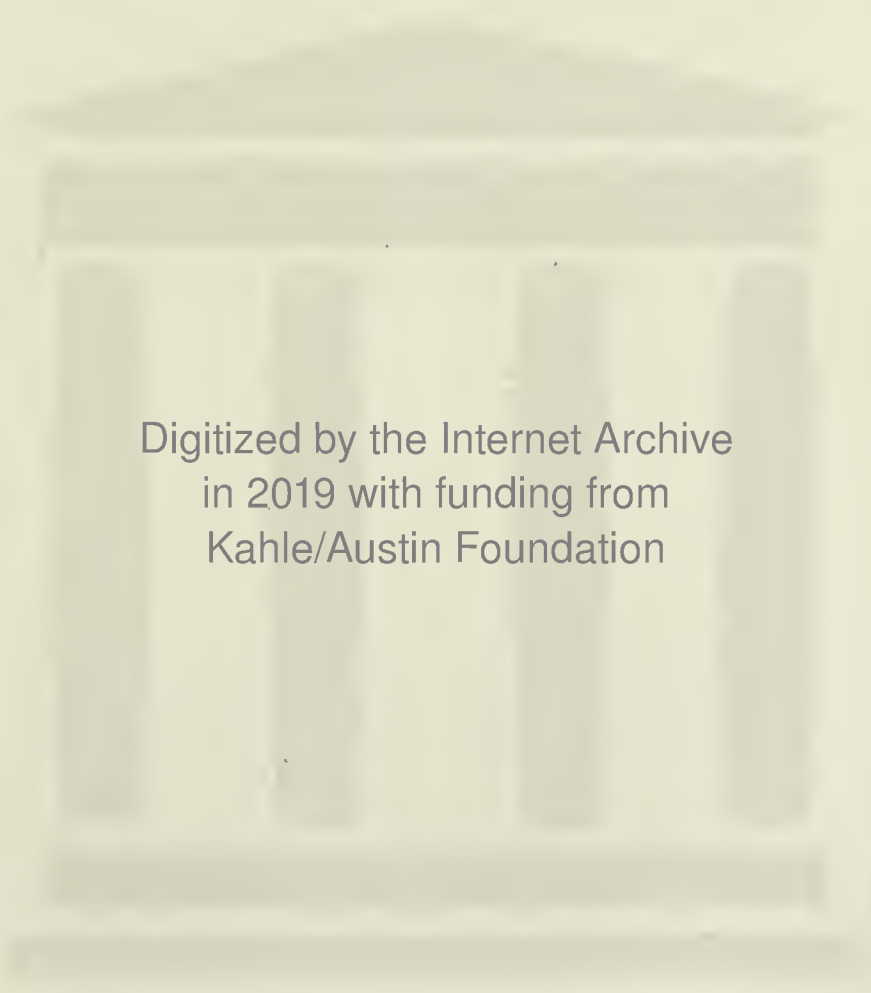


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COBDEN AS A CITIZEN



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*Richard Cobden
at about twenty six*

Portrait by J. M. W. Turner

RICHARD COBDEN WHEN ABOUT 26 YEARS OLD.
FROM A PAINTING IN THE POSSESSION OF THE
FAMILY.

COBDEN AS A CITIZEN

A CHAPTER IN MANCHESTER HISTORY

A FACSIMILE OF COBDEN'S PAMPHLET
"INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH"
WITH AN INTRODUCTION RECORDING
HIS CAREER AS A MUNICIPAL REFORMER
AND A COBDEN BIBLIOGRAPHY
BY WILLIAM E. A. AXON

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
ADELPHI TERRACE. MCMVII

DA 536 CCA 8 1907

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To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, and the Corporation of the City of Manchester, is dedicated this record of the services of Richard Cobden, to whose zeal and energy Manchester owes the possibility of local self-government.

PREFACE

THIS book originated in the discovery by Mrs. Jane Cobden Unwin among some family papers of a copy of her father's long-lost pamphlet, "Incorporate Your Borough!" This tract, of which 5,000 copies were printed in 1838, was the beginning of the successful agitation for the incorporation of Manchester. It has long been vainly sought for by collectors; two industrious harvesters of local lore, father and son, have been unsuccessfully looking out for it since 1852!

When it was deemed desirable to reprint this rare, if not unique, pamphlet, it seemed also desirable to put on record some details of Cobden's efforts as a citizen before he became absorbed in the work of parliament. His activities are, of course, indicated in Mr. John Morley's admirable biography, but many of the details here given would have been out of place there. Yet it is thought that they will not be without interest at a time when the possibilities of useful municipal work are continually increasing, and the dignity and importance of local self-government are more generally recognized than in the day when Cobden was a member of the Corporation of Manchester.

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CHAPTER I. MANCHESTER UNDER THE FEUDAL MANOR.

THE local government of Manchester in the closing years of the reign of William IV was hopelessly antiquated and ineffective. The Lord of the Manor, by the agency of his steward, summoned at his will a Court Leet, and the jurors there elected a Boroughreeve, Constables, Mise Leyers, Market Lookers, Ale Tasters, Muzzlers of mastiff dogs, a Pounder, and other honorary officers. The jury also appointed salaried deputy constables and beadles. The jury had the power to inflict fines in repression of nuisances, but their main function was that of appointing the municipal officers.

The boroughreeve had to be a person resident in the township of Manchester, and as dwelling-houses became transformed into warehouses there was an increasing difficulty in obtaining a suitable person. This difficulty was increased by the unwritten law that the boroughreeve must not be a shopkeeper! There was a similar edict against Nonconformists whether rich or poor, though to this there were some exceptions. In addition to the Court Leet officials the churchwardens and sidesmen had certain civic as well as ecclesiastical duties to perform, both in relation to rating and to the relief of the poor. The rapid growth of Man-

chester had necessitated the obtaining of various "improvement acts," and these were administered by a body of "police commissioners" elected by a suffrage which was always restricted, although varied from time to time. The out-townships of Hulme and Chorlton, which formed part of the parliamentary borough of Manchester, had their own constables.

The surveyors of highways for the parish and township of Manchester were appointed at vestry meetings held in the Collegiate Church. The accounts were submitted to a vestry and parish meeting, which, having passed the accounts, resolved itself into a meeting of "leypayers" of the township. What were the exact limits of the functions of these varying authorities it would be difficult to say.

The adjoining borough of Salford was governed by a Court Leet as a Manor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and by commissioners appointed under local acts.

The constables of the out-townships were appointed at the Court Leet of the Hundred of Salford. At the court held 19th April, 1837, Mr. John Harland complained of the nuisance caused by the chimney of a manufactory. He showed that there had been a presentment in 1832, that amendment had been promised, and

that the nuisance continued. The barrister who presided said that it was "scarcely necessary" to refer to the old presentment and the jury thereupon decided that there was not sufficient evidence of the existence of the nuisance.¹

When, in 1835, the Municipal Corporations Act was before Parliament, a petition in favour of the bill and against the delay which was intended by the device of receiving further evidence from the old corporations whose corruption had been fully shown by the inquiries of the Commission, was signed in a day by 22,832 inhabitants and was taken to London by a deputation consisting of Thomas Potter and George Hadfield. They went "in a post-chaise and four" at half-past nine on Thursday, 7th August, and reached London on the following afternoon. The petition was presented by Lord Melbourne on 10th August, and led to a curious little debate. After Lord Brougham had supported the petition, the Duke of Newcastle said that he had received a letter from "a very good Conservative" who said that the petition had been "got up in the way in which such petitions very frequently were—by obtaining the signatures of persons who were perfectly incompetent to affix their signatures to it. . . . It was by

¹ "Manchester Times," 22nd April, 1837.

placing tables at the corners of the public streets and getting all such persons as could just scribble their names to put them down: as the boys came out at their dinner-hour they were called to sign their names: not one of them knowing what they were signing. I hope," added the writer, "you will explain to the House this trick, carrying on by the Whig-Radicals—the representative party of our blessed House of Commons. If the qualification were higher, we would not have such members as we now have. You may rely upon it that the property and prosperity of this borough are Conservatives." The reply of the Liberals was that in the urgency of the case there was no time to call a public meeting, and, as a matter of fact, the signatures were all obtained within twelve hours.¹

On the passage of the Act there was no immediate movement for its adoption in Man-

¹ Hansard's Debates 10th August, 1835. The Duke of Newcastle was the borough-monger, famous for his opposition to the claims of the dissenters, to Catholic emancipation and to parliamentary reform. There was a question as to some of his tenants who had been ejected at Newcastle, and he asked in reply, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I please with mine own?" His mansion, Nottingham Castle, was burnt in the riots of 1831 and he had to fortify Clumber. See "Dictionary of National Biography," xi, 98.

chester, although it was acknowledged by all that some change was necessary. There was, however, no agreement as to what the change should be. Some thought that a modification of the police acts would suffice, and against any great change there was the influence of the vested interests of the Lord of the Manor, and the interests, not vested but certainly powerful, of those who feared that the loss of their lucrative positions might be the result of a more democratic constitution. The extreme Tories looked with disfavour on popular government, and the extreme Radicals, disappointed in the results of the first Reform Bill, were unreasonably suspicious of all Whig measures.

CHAPTER II. DEFEAT OF "MODERATE" MUNICIPAL REFORMERS.

IN 1836 Mr. Robert Barbour was elected boroughreeve but refused to accept the office and was fined £100. In the latter part of the year a committee was formed to inquire into the local government of the district. After several meetings they issued an address which was signed by Mr. William Neild as their Chairman. In this the inconvenience and inefficiency of the mode then in practice were pointed out. "Instances of riot have often occurred, and considerable damage sustained, when the aid of the military has been called in, but which might easily have been suppressed in its origin by the civil power had there been a sufficiently numerous and properly organized police force." The Manorial Court could appoint municipal officers, but had no power to raise a single shilling to enable them to discharge the duties of their office. The funds had to be supplied by the churchwardens from the poor rate. "Thus the party who make the appointment can grant no funds, the party who supplies the funds has no power over the appointment." The duties of the several officers were ill-defined. "These officers are placed at the head of the commissioners of police, partly by custom and partly by recent Acts of Parliament, and yet the commissioners have no more

control over their appointment than the leypayers." The manorial jury was composed exclusively of those living in the township of Manchester, and as the increase of factories and warehouses proceeded in the centre of the city, the number of persons from whom a selection could be made was constantly decreasing. The day police were paid by the churchwardens out of the poor rate, the night police were paid out of a police rate levied by the commissioners appointed under various improvement acts. The "out-townships," Hulme, Chorlton, and other districts which by the rapid growth of industry had been made integral parts of Manchester, had each its own constables and ineffective method of government.¹

Mr. Neild's proposed changes did not go beyond the consolidation of the day and night police, and it met with the support of many of the leading inhabitants. But it excited hostility from the Tories who disliked the representative element in local government and from the Radicals who opposed everything that emanated from the "base Whigs." A public meeting was held in the Town Hall, presided over by the boroughreeve, on 9th February,

¹ This address is printed in the "Manchester Times," 7th January, 1837.

1837. The streets were placarded with bills inviting the opponents to attend and defeat proposals for the introduction of "the rural police, the new poor law, bastile workhouses, separation of man and wife, of children from their parents, the prison dress, starvation diet, and the dissection of the dead bodies of the poor." All of these dire consequences were to flow from placing the day and night police under the same control. One chartist opposed the proposal because it might lead to the introduction of the (then) new Poor Law; another argued that crime increased in proportion to the means taken to repress it, and that it was safest to be without police because then every one had to be his own watchman. Mr. Archibald Prentice, who was as radical as any of the chartists, proposed that in any police bill the voting qualification should be extended to all rated householders. Against this declaration of their own principles the Radicals voted with great enthusiasm, and Mr. Neild's moderate proposals were defeated by men who at the same time declared their dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements as being "most unjust towards the larger part of the inhabitants of the town."

Such was the position of affairs when, on 19th

October, 1837, Richard Cobden, as "an inhabitant and resiant," was summoned to attend as one of the jurors of the Court Leet of the Manor of Manchester. The court was held in a dingy room in Brown Street, and decided to appoint Mr. William Neild boroughreeve. He was a wealthy and philanthropic Quaker, and his election showed that the supply of suitable Churchmen was practically exhausted. What followed is thus told by the journalist of the day:

Mr. Neild then came forward and said that two years ago, when elected to the office of constable, he abided by the decision of that court contrary to his inclinations, and at considerable inconvenience to himself. He thought, therefore, that after the lapse of so short a period, it was rather too much that he should be again called upon. He had no wish to shrink from public duties, he knew that they must be performed, and he for one had hitherto borne his share cheerfully, and discharged his duties to the best of his abilities. His health was such at present that he should be unable to discharge the duties of the office to which he was appointed; and taking that into consideration, along with the fact of his having so recently served in one public office, and discharged other public duties for nearly twenty years,

he trusted that the jury would excuse him on this occasion from serving the office. He certainly had felt surprised when informed that their choice, under these circumstances, had fallen upon him. He was told as a reason, that the number of persons eligible to fill the office, residing in the town, had become so limited, owing to so many having withdrawn in order to avoid the possibility of being elected to these offices by this court. Now, he would ask whether such was a proper state of things to exist in a town like this? (Hear, hear.) He did not mean to complain of the privileges of this court. It was not their fault that such a system of electing public officers to discharge the highest and most important trusts in this large town was in existence; and that in consequence of it, while in other towns men instead of shrinking from the duty courted it, in Manchester no one could be found to accept it. In exercising their present powers the court was only exercising a prerogative which had resided in it for centuries, and its officers were gentlemen well worthy of the duties which they had to discharge; but he thought it was for them to consider whether the state of things, which under its existence had been brought about, ought to be suffered to continue? The

right of the respectable jury who had now called upon him he would not question—under other circumstances he would have been called upon by them without a complaint; but there were other gentlemen eligible to fill the office, and he did think it a hardship that the collar should again be placed on his neck whilst the gentlemen composing that jury had none of them as yet worn it. (Loud cries of “Hear, hear.”) As the town had progressed in its commercial prosperity, various new institutes had arisen, and were arising, adapted to its altered circumstances. He would ask them if a town like this, with a police as impotent in principle as futile in its attempts to discharge business which devolved upon it, ought to remain in its present state, having for its officers not men, as in other towns, contending for the appointment, and ready to sacrifice everything to obtain it, but gentlemen appointed in opposition to their wills (merely because residents), and brought forward like culprits and obliged to take the office. This arose solely from the number of persons eligible to serve the public offices having become so limited, through the residence of many who would otherwise have been eligible having moved from the township. Thirty years ago the choice was ample enough, but

now it had become limited, and every year was making the caseworse, and increasing the hardship upon those remaining. Even of the officers who were about to retire, two of these had withdrawn from the township to avoid being again called upon. Reluctantly, therefore, he must beg to withdraw from the appointment—reluctantly, he said, because so long as it was the duty of men to give their services to the public he was unwilling to shrink from his own share of them. He knew that in thus withdrawing he was not removing from his shoulders the liability of being again called upon. On another occasion, when in better health, and under other circumstances, he might submit at whatever inconvenience to himself.

Mr. Neild here handed to the steward a letter from his medical attendant, Mr. W. Anderson, certifying that he should not, until better, undertake any new duty. This letter was handed to the jury, and, after a few moments' consultation among themselves, the Foreman stated that there was not sufficient reason, in their opinion, in that letter to induce them to alter the appointment.

Mr. Neild said that on that ground he had declined, and nothing should induce him to submit.

Mr. Newbery said there was no reason for believing that Mr. Neild's illness would be of long duration, and no doubt his colleagues would be able to relieve him by their assistance from any arduous duties so long as his health was not restored.

Mr. Neild replied that it would be no relief to him to be appointed to an office to neglect its duties. He was well acquainted with the arduous duties attached to that office, and the person appointed ought to devote much of his time to it. He trusted the jury had too much regard for the interests of the town to appoint a person whose health must oblige him to neglect his duties.

Mr. Newbery (laughing): Well, Mr. Neild, you are excellently qualified for the office, and we cannot find another who is.

Mr. Neild: What! do you mean to tell me that, in a town like this, there is not another person fit to be chosen to such an office?

Mr. Newbery: Not one.

Mr. Neild: What! is there not one gentleman upon the jury or in the town who will volunteer his services for the good of the town?

Mr. Newbery: Not one.

Mr. Neild: Then, after having so recently

held a public office, I do not think it fair that I should be made the scapegoat.

Mr. Samuel Kay (deputy steward): Then we must pronounce him in contempt of court.

Mr. R. Cobden: Have the jury come to that decision?

Mr. Kay: I understand so.

Mr. R. Cobden: Not with my consent.

Mr. Neild (in surprise): If it is their decision it is a very strained one.

The jury here retired for about ten minutes. On their return the Foreman said they could not consent to change the appointment.

Mr. Neild: Well, I cannot accept the appointment.

Mr. Kay: Is it your intention, then, to go in contempt of court?

The Foreman: No, Mr. Neild had better retire for a quarter of an hour to think of the matter.

Mr. Neild: It is not for me to dictate to this court, but I would suggest, to prevent an unnecessary delay, that I cannot change my determination. It is one which I have not come to without mature consideration, and therefore to wait in the hope that I may alter it would only be an unnecessary detention of the jury.

Mr. Kay: Is the court to understand then

that you refuse to take the solemn affirmation to discharge the duties of the office to which you have been chosen?

Mr. Neild: Yes.

Mr. Kay: Then I pronounce you in contempt of court.

The steward (Mr. James Heath Leigh, barrister-at-law) then rose and said he was sorry to inform Mr. Neild that the jury having chosen him to the office of boroughreeve, and after hearing his objections to take the appointed office and duly weighing them, having adhered to their choice, it was his unpleasant duty to inflict a fine upon him—and the fine of last year having been found insufficient to deter persons from still refusing to obey the court—it was, he repeated, his unpleasant duty to inflict a much heavier one on this occasion. It had been his intention to have advised the Lord of the Manor in future to proceed in such cases by indictment against the parties, and such a course would probably in future be taken. The fine of the court upon Mr. Neild for refusing to serve the office of boroughreeve was £200.

Mr. Neild said the decision which had just been come to by the court was, in his mind, a most extraordinary one. He had no wish to

trumpet forth what he had done, but for the last twenty years he had not shrunk from the performance of any public duty to which he had been liable, in which he could be of service to his fellow townsmen ("hear, hear," from a juror); and during the last ten years no inconsiderable portion of his time had been devoted to public service, in addition to having last year but one accepted the office of constable. He did so because he thought that every man enjoying the benefit of valuable public institutions was called upon to perform his quota of the public duties attached to them. If this was to be the reward of his services they might take the furniture from his house to pay the fine, for he would not willingly pay one farthing of it! (Here an expression of approbation escaped some one in the body of the court, but its repetition was prevented by the deputy-steward threatening to turn any one out who should again similarly express his opinion.) He certainly had not at the hands of that court expected such a fine; he had heard the last decision of the jury, after hearing his reasons for objecting to take the office, with perfect astonishment, and he retired from the court with a feeling of as complete disgust as he ever experienced before in the whole course of his life.

Mr. Neild then left the court.

Mr. Kay: Mr. John Ferguson, you have been appointed one of the constables; have you any objections to serve?

Mr. Ferguson: I have an objection; but after what Mr. Neild has urged in excuse, and seen the manner in which it has been received, I am sure that nothing I can say will be of use.

Mr. Ferguson and Mr. David Price then took the oaths as constables, and Mr. Thomas, deputy-constable, and Messrs. James Sawley, John Beswick, and John Bianchi, beadles, were also sworn in the usual form. The jury, having consulted for a few moments, then named John Brown, Esq. (one of the Directors of the Bank of Manchester), as a fit person to serve the office of boroughreeve, and a message was sent to summon his attendance.

After this somewhat exciting interlude the jury proceeded to adjudicate upon the misdeeds of butchers who sold diseased carcasses, huxters who used false weights and measures, owners of factory chimneys that "made large quantities of smoke," and similar enormities. Cobden was appointed one of the "affearers," or assessors of the fines then ordered to be levied. These proceedings did not excite Cob-

den's interest, and he was absent during a part of the proceedings. But he was present at the conclusion of the business, when the jurors received tickets entitling them to participate in a dinner at the expense of the Lord of the Manor. "Well, what in the world does all this mean?" Cobden asked, "Is it that in this great town of Manchester we are still living under the feudal system? Does Sir Oswald Mosley, living up in Derbyshire, send his mandate down here for us to come into this dingy hole to elect a government for Manchester and then go and get a ticket for soup at his expense? Why, now I will put an end to this thing."

The Court Leet met again 21st October, 1837, when Mr. John Brown reluctantly accepted the office of boroughreeve. They then memorialized Sir Oswald Mosley to remit the fine inflicted on Mr. Neild for refusing to take office.¹ Mr. Cobden had drawn up a declaration which the steward was very unwilling to receive, and some of the jurors then expressed their objection to a clause in it which suggested incorporation. After some conversation Cobden withdrew this part, and the document was

¹ This the Lord of the Manor subsequently consented to do. The fact is announced in the "Manchester Times" of 11th November, 1837.

signed by all the jury. It set forth that owing to the conversion in the centre of the town of dwelling houses into warehouses the difficulty of appointing officers was great and increasing, and was accompanied by an unwillingness to accept office: "The jury regard such a state of things as highly inimical to the best interests, and derogatory to the just dignity of this the second town of the empire; and they earnestly hope and recommend that immediate steps may be taken to remedy the evil."¹

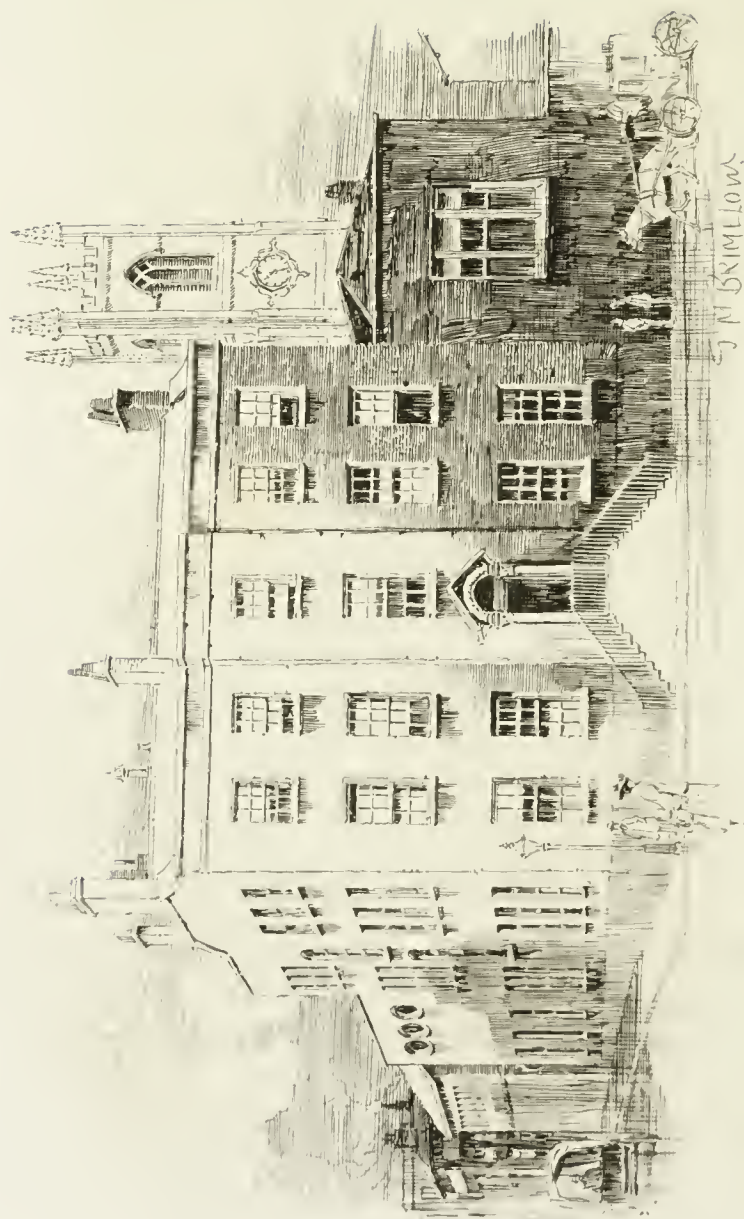
¹ "Manchester Chronicle," 21st October, 1837.

CHAPTER III. COBDEN AS MUNI- CIPAL REFORMER.

MR. NEILD'S efforts at conciliation and compromise having failed, Cobden wrote asking his co-operation in a different line of attack and assuring him of success. "If you will do this thing in the way that I intend to do it, and you will join with me, I will undertake to say that we will get a charter of incorporation for Manchester." Mr. Neild then went to Cobden and said: "I have tried my way, and it does not answer; I will go with you; all I stipulate is, that you will not take any course but what is consistent with morality and honour, and I will join you in any way you choose in order to put an end to this state of things."

The "Manchester Guardian" declared that a municipal corporation was the only way out of the difficulty, and that it was "a perfect absurdity to continue this antiquated mode of electing municipal officers in such a town as Manchester." Mr. Archibald Prentice also vigorously advocated this reform in the "Manchester Times."

Mr. Cobden, who had already taken part in local administration as a commissioner of police and as a sidesman of the Old Church, wrote a pamphlet entitled, "Incorporate your Borough," and five thousand copies were cir-



Golden's House in Quay Street, near the County Court

COBDEN'S RESIDENCE IN QUAY ST., MANCHESTER,
NOW THE COUNTY COURT.

culated. For many years this tract was sought for by local collectors, but it appeared to be hopelessly lost, when in 1903 Mrs. Cobden Unwin found a copy amongst some family papers. It was written in the big roomy house in Quay Street, which was long Cobden's residence, and which was afterwards the home of Owens' College, and is now the County Court.

In this pamphlet Cobden styles himself "a Radical Reformer," and this was perhaps the best description that could be given of him. The uneasiness with which the Whigs, from first to last, watched his proceedings was due to the fact that he would not be bound by party ties, and refused to acquiesce in what he regarded as mischievous action, whether it was proposed by Whig or Tory. Whilst he always sought to be one

Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet,

he was not afraid of unpopular opinions, and was in advance of the "official Liberals" on most questions. Thus, in speaking at a dinner given 6th September, 1837, to Mr. Joseph Brotherton on his re-election (by a majority of two) as M.P. for Salford, Cobden made a spirited appeal for the ballot, and mentioned

that he had written to Mr. Grote suggesting that a lecturer should be sent out with the two-fold mission of advocating the ballot and of collecting evidence in favour of its necessity. And he made a pointed allusion to Mr. Trafford who had brought up 100 of his tenants at the late election like cattle to the market.¹ In a speech in London, 15th January, 1845, he said in regard to women's suffrage. "I wish they had the franchise, for they would often make a much better use of it than their husbands." And in a speech in the House of Commons, 6th July, 1848, he narrated a conversation "with a gentleman who was engaged in drawing up the Charter." This was, no doubt, Francis Place, who asked Cobden to support universal suffrage on the ground of principle. He replied, "If it is a principle that a man shall have a vote because he pays taxes, why should not also a widow who pays taxes, and is liable to serve as churchwarden and overseer, have a vote for Member of Parliament?" Place was in favour of women's suffrage, but he was out-voted on this point by his colleagues. Cobden adds: "I observed that he acted as I did—he gave up the principle, and adopted expediency." It is a matter of some interest that women's

¹ "Manchester Times," 9th September, 1837.

suffrage was advocated in 1792 by Mr. George Philips of Manchester, who in 1828 was created a baronet. He was the Chairman of the Manchester Exchange, and laid the foundation stone of the building in 1806.

"Incorporate your Borough" shows the qualities that pre-eminently distinguished Cobden's speeches and writings. His main reliance is on the logic of facts. These are arranged with the greatest skill so that the reader is carried forward step by step to an inevitable conclusion. There are some vigorous satirical touches, but Cobden's main effort in this as in all his political efforts is not either to dazzle or to irritate, but to persuade, and to persuade not by fine words or even by lofty eloquence, but by a sober statement of the truths of the case and by deductions logically to be drawn from them. It is an admirable example of Cobden's powers of exposition.

In the following chapter the reader will find a reprint of this pamphlet, and at p. 139 a facsimile reprint.

CHAPTER IV. INCORPORATE YOUR
BOROUGH! A LETTER TO THE IN-
HABITANTS OF MANCHESTER. BY
RICHARD COBDEN.

FELLOW TOWNSMEN and Brother Reformers.

Lord John Russell declared in the House of Commons a few days ago that the *landed interest* has, and ought to have, an ascendancy over the town populations in the parliamentary representation of the country; but he forgot to explain his meaning by the term *landed interest*. Let us try to supply the omission. There are the labourers on the soil, who constitute forty-nine out of fifty of the rural population; what influence has this vast majority ever possessed in the counsels of the empire? Consult the fires of Swing, the history of the Dorchester labourers, and the report of the new poor law commissioners for an answer! The tenants-at-will form, probably, one in a hundred of the inhabitants of the agricultural districts, and the fifty pound Chandos clause has given to their landlords, I had almost said their *owners*, such a recognized property in their mockery of a franchise, that we no longer shudder when we see them, at a general election, marching by hundreds, like gangs of white slaves, to the hustings, to vote at the command of their Tory drivers. Does Lord John mean that the opinions of these helots have any ascendancy in the legislature. No; for his

lordship's term *landed interest*, read the *landlord interest*—the interest of the aristocracy and squirearchy of the country, a body constituting not a fraction of one ten thousandth part of the entire community, as opposed to the just interest of the nation at large! The *landlord* interest, we are told, by its child and champion, the Home Secretary, has a right to dominion over the towns,—this is a claim of very ancient standing. We read in history, that more than five hundred years since the barbarous ancestors of these very same feudal landlords used to make excursions from their strongholds to plunder, oppress, and ravage, with fire and sword, the peaceable and industrious inhabitants of the towns; until at length the kings of England, who were, in turn, exposed to the insolence of these marauders, from motives of policy, gave to the principal towns charters of corporation, or *co-operation*, which enabled their inhabitants to govern themselves, and protect their persons and property from such lordly depredators as chanced to inhabit the neighbouring baronial castles. The battle of our day is still against the aristocracy; and not the young and innocent occupant of the throne. The lords of Clumber, Belvoir, and Woburn, although they can no longer storm

your town, and ransack your stores and shops, at the head of their mailed vassals, are as effectually plundering your manufacturers and their artisans; for, by the aid of their parchment votes and tenant-at-will serfs, they are still enabled to levy their infamous bread tax upon your industry. And must you tamely submit to this pillage, or, like your ancestors of old, will you not resist the aristocratic plunderers? If the latter, then imitate your forefathers by union and co-operation; amalgamate all ranks in your town by securing to all classes a share in its government and protection; give unity, force, and efficiency to the intelligent and wealthy community of Manchester, and qualify it by organization, as it already is entitled by numbers, to be the leader in the battle against monopoly and privilege. In a word, INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH.

The new municipal Corporation Act, which was passed in 1835 when the spirit of reform ruled triumphantly in the House of Commons, was concocted by a body of commissioners whose leaders were thorough Radicals; and although it received some damage, in the natural course of things, in its passage through the Lords, yet sufficient was extorted from the fears of the upper House, so recently

humbled by the passage of the Reform Act, to secure a charter of popular self-government applicable to all the great towns of the kingdom, and of a more democratic character than any other institution in Europe, excepting, perhaps, it be found in Switzerland.

By this Act every male person of full age, who has occupied for three years, and been rated for any house, shop, counting-house, warehouse, or room (they may by either the *same* or *different* premises) and has lived that time within seven miles of the borough, is a burgess of such borough, and a member of its body corporate, of mayor, aldermen, and burgesses. The government of the boroughs is vested in the council, to be composed of mayor, aldermen, and councillors. The number of aldermen is in the proportion of one-third of the councillors, who are more or less numerous according to the size of the borough; in Leeds and Liverpool they have each forty-eight councillors and sixteen aldermen, which would probably be the complement for Manchester. The councillors are elected by the burgesses for a term of three years, one-third going out every year, but being re-eligible. The aldermen are elected by the councillors, either from their own body or from the

burgesses, for a term of six years, one half going out at the end of every third year, but being also eligible for re-election. The mayor is elected every year by the council from the aldermen and councillors; he is a magistrate by virtue of his office, and also for a year after he ceases to be mayor; and he has precedence in all places within the borough. The larger boroughs, where quarter sessions are held, are exempt from the payment of county rates. In the original bill, as passed by the Commons, power was given to the town councils to nominate borough magistrates, subject to the approval of the Government, which clause was altered by the peers, leaving the absolute appointment in the hands of the crown. But the Whig ministry has acted up to the original intention of the bill by calling on the councils to nominate magistrates, and in almost every case confirming their choice; so that the power of electing their own magistrates virtually rests with the corporations. There are, of course, a multitude of other clauses in the Act; amongst which are regulations for the appointment of a town clerk and a recorder, and for forming a watch committee; fines fixed for refusing to serve when elected; power given to the council to make by-laws, and to fine to the extent of

five pounds; and there is a clause exempting the burgesses from serving as jurors at courts of quarter sessions for the county.

The fundamental principles of the new Municipal Corporation Act are—the *household qualification*, and an *equality of suffrage*; upon these broad and secure foundations the entire superstructure rests. Every man's vote, however humble his circumstances may be, is of equal value with his wealthiest neighbour's. There is no clause borrowed from Sturges Bourne's Act giving six votes to the rich mill-owner, and only one to the small shopkeeper. The banker or the merchant, though worth a million, and though he ride in his carriage to the polling booth, can only record the same number of votes as the poor artisan, who walks there perhaps slip-shod and aproned from his garret or cellar.

Upwards of 180 large towns, situated in every part of the empire, are governed according to the provisions of the new Municipal Reform Act, and with universal satisfaction to the people. They are, in fact, so many little democracies, calculated to afford useful lessons of equality; to destroy the barriers behind which the proud and wealthy are too prone to thrust the poor and dependent; to teach the

haughty few to respect the abject many; and, which is of greater value still, they tend to impart to the multitude the elevating feelings of self-respect.

By a provision of the Municipal Corporation Reform Act, the Privy Council has the power to incorporate any town whose inhabitants petition for the privilege. Birmingham lately held a great public meeting, in its noble town hall, for that purpose, at which its popular members, Messrs. Attwood and Scholefield, and all the Radical leaders attended, when resolutions were unanimously and enthusiastically passed in favour of an immediate application to the Privy Council for an incorporation of that borough. Fellow townsmen! follow the example of the men of Birmingham, who are always foremost in the path of reform—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH. The mode of securing the advantages of democratic self-government for your town is easy and simple. Let a public meeting be called, and resolutions be passed in favour of the object desired; then appoint a committee to prepare a petition to Her Majesty in council. A month's notice must be given in the *Gazette* before the application can be taken into consideration; afterwards, and in due course of official proceedings, the

attainment of the act of incorporation is certain; and next November, at the annual election of corporate officers throughout the British empire, Manchester will be entitled to enjoy, along with Leeds, Glasgow, Liverpool, and the rest of the great boroughs, the blessings of free self-government. Imitate, then, the example of Birmingham in the promptitude of your proceedings. Is there no danger that circumstances may arise to impede you in your application to the Queen's Council? *Are there no symptoms ominous of Tory ascendancy?* Should the country again fall a prey to that political party, how much the more would your town stand in need of the protection of a *Liberal local government!*

Recollect that the massacre of the 16th of August, 1819, could not have occurred if Manchester had then been incorporated according to the provisions of the present Municipal Reform Act;—and why? Because the united magistrates of Lancashire and Cheshire, who then entered the town to hold their bench at the Star Inn, take the command of the police, and order the soldiers to cut down and trample upon unarmed crowds, would, in such a case, have no more jurisdiction over Manchester than Constantinople. No!—INCORPORATE YOUR

BOROUGH! and thenceforth neither Mr. Hulton, of Hulton, nor any Tory squire or parson, will ever come into your town at the head of a dozen magisterial bumpkins, first to let loose a troop of fox hunters, disguised as yeomanry cavalry, to try the metal of their swords upon helpless women and children, and afterwards to return public thanks to the officers and men for their extreme forbearance on the occasion!¹ No; for by one of the provisions of the Corporation Reform Act, no person can be appointed to the office of justice of the peace in any of the boroughs holding quarter sessions, unless he live within the limits prescribed for the residences of the burgesses. In this clause

¹ The conduct of the Common Council of the city of London, at this melancholy and memorable period, proves the advantages derived from a municipal corporation, particularly in times of excitement and danger; and contrasts mournfully with the prostrate and helpless fate of the town of Manchester for want of such an organization. No sooner was it known that the Prince Regent had been advised to express his approbation of those proceedings than the Common Council of London passed resolutions condemning the conduct of the magistrates and yeomanry as being "disgraceful to the character of Englishmen"; and they addressed the Prince Regent, remonstrating with his royal highness for having been induced to express his approval of the conduct of the abettors and perpetrators of those atrocities, and praying him to cause the guilty perpetrators thereof to be brought to signal and condign punishment.

alone I find a sufficient reason, if there were not a hundred others, for applying for an act of incorporation, and thus to place for ever the population of our town and neighbourhood beyond the control of a booby squirearchy, who abhor us not more for our love of political freedom than for those active and intellectual pursuits which contrast so strongly with that mental stupor in which they exist—I had almost said—vegetate.

I have endeavoured to give you a faint outline of the new Municipal Reform Act, under the provisions of which it is in your power to place your borough; but let me now glance for a moment, for the sake of contrast, at the kind of government which this place at present suffers under. The chief municipal officer is the boroughreeve, appointed at the Court Leet of the Lord of the Manor; the two constables being chosen at the same time and manner, for the heads of the police; and the three are universally recognized as the highest authorities of the town; and responsible for the peace, lives, and properties of this populous, wealthy, and somewhat excitable community. Now, how will my readers, who are not in the secret, be surprised when they are told of the manner in which these important functionaries are

appointed to the government of the second town in the British Empire! It cannot be better explained than by describing the proceedings at the last Court Leet of the Lord of the Manor, when it was my amusing fate to be summoned as one of the jurors.

And first for the locality, where the august ceremony of the election of the highest municipal officers for the town of Manchester takes place.

At the appointed hour, ascending by a flight of steps in Brown Street, leading up to several other apartments, and to a dancing master's academy amongst the rest, I reached the door of the manor court room, which is large, and altogether destitute of furniture, whose row of tall old-fashioned windows would, but for the crust of smoke and dirt that covered them, have afforded a cheerful light. The atmosphere of the room was heavy and stale; it had probably been confined ever since the last public meeting of the teetotalers was held there, a month before. To the left of the door lay a heap of sawdust, provided, perhaps (but this is only conjecture), against a meeting of operative Conservatives, when it would be judiciously strewed on the floor to hide the dirt which those worthies are accustomed to

carry about them. A filthy white dog, with black spots, had curled himself upon this tempting bed; and he lifted up his ears with excusable surprise at the shrill tones of the crier, who now opened the court with the usual "O yes," followed by an unintelligible jargon of Saxon, old English, and Norman epithets. The jurors were now penned within a small enclosure at the furthest extremity of the room; the representative of the Lord of the Manor took his seat in a small desk springing from the wall; his legal agent sat below; the oaths were administered to the jurymen; and the assessor, having in about three minutes and a half delivered his charge, adjourned the court till the afternoon. Whilst these preliminaries were going on I looked over the enclosure which, I supposed, was designed to separate the crowd of spectators from the jurors, and I counted, besides the police constables, exactly *seven individuals*, and they, one by one, walked listlessly away, leaving the jurors only in the deserted and murky chamber; and we now proceeded to make choice of three persons to fill the offices of boroughreeve and constables of Manchester—a task in which we were greatly quickened by the piercing cold vapour with which the apartment was filled. Having

dispatched messengers to the individuals nominated, summoning them to appear in the afternoon, to be sworn into office, we separated. At the appointed hour the court and jurors again assembled, when the gentleman who had been nominated to the office of boroughreeve attended and claimed to be exempted on the ground of ill health and previous services. The jurors protested that there was not another person remaining in the township liable, and at the same time eligible, to fill this high office. Some little difference of opinion existing, however, we requested permission to retire, and were conducted through a door opening off the landing outside the room into a closet under the stairs, in which were deposited the bonnets, shawls, cloaks, and clogs of the nymphs who were threading the mazes of the quadrille and waltz in the dancing academy above. Here some stood, while others sat, and the remainder stooped beneath the stairs, till our deliberations, which were not a little accelerated by our incommodious quarters, were brought to a close, and we returned into court with a verdict against the claims to exemption put in by the boroughreeve elect, who thereupon was declared contumacious, and fined £200 (which fine was afterwards remitted).

Our choice next fell upon an individual absent from Manchester, and the court was adjourned for two days that he might have time to appear. On reassembling at the appointed time he presented himself to protest against the nomination; but he yielded reluctantly, and the honour was at last gently forced upon him. The two individuals chosen constables were also unwillingly compelled to take the oaths of office. The crier soon afterwards formally adjourned the court to the *Mosley Arms Hotel for dinner*, at which all present laughed heartily; and thus, very appropriately, terminated the *farce of a mock election of officers to govern the affairs of the town of Manchester*.

Neither the boroughreeve nor the constables whom I joined in electing were known to me, privately or publicly. I had not the least knowledge of them, personally or by repute; and other jurors were alike in the dark upon the subject of their qualifications. The jury summoned to appoint those officers are selected by the legal agent of the Lord of the Manor; they attend unwillingly; the constables serve their offices unwillingly; the boroughreeve submits to his appointment unwillingly; the public is indifferent to the whole proceeding,

not one in ten thousand of the population of Manchester attending to witness it; probably not one person in fifty of the inhabitants of the borough knows even the names of the boroughreeve and constables at this moment; and not one individual in two hundred is acquainted with them personally. Yet to them is intrusted the guardianship of the peace of the town; and, in case of emergency, on them should we be compelled to depend for conduct to command the confidence of a population of 100,000 persons, of whom not five in 100 ever heard of their names!¹ How much ought we to thank that inherent love of order and reverence for authority in the people which, notwithstanding our absurd adhesion to old and obsolete forms of government, secure to us, in spite of ourselves, the blessings of tranquillity!

The difficulty in appointing individuals residing within the township who alone are liable to serve the offices of boroughreeve and constables, arises from the circumstance of

¹ I beg to be understood as referring only to the system, and not meaning anything personal or invidious in alluding to these gentlemen, who are, I believe, as reputable and as well qualified as any of their predecessors to fill the offices to which they are appointed.

almost all the merchants, manufacturers, and wholesale dealers having removed their residences into the out-townships, where they are beyond the jurisdiction of the Lord of the Manor's Court Leet. There is another circumstance, however, which, whilst it explains partly the difficulty, will also throw a light upon the aristocratic spirit which clings more or less to everything having a feudal origin. It is, of course, very well known that hundreds of respectable and wealthy *shopkeepers* reside within the township of Manchester; but it is not equally notorious that it has always been a maxim, at the election of municipal officers, that no retailer was eligible to fill the office of boroughreeve or constable! And so anxious have the Tory manufacturers and wholesale dealers been to apportion amongst their own order dignities, however humble, that even the menial offices in the gift of Sir Oswald Mosley's feudal court have been distributed in the same aristocratic spirit. A late parliamentary candidate for the borough of Salford held the high office of ale taster; and the "Manchester Directory" for 1833 records that our richest banker, an individual whose princely fortune would entitle him to a dukedom in any other country in Europe, held the responsible post of *muzzler*

*of mastiff dogs and bitches!*¹ The tone which has so long prevailed in the government of the town has naturally enough pervaded all our public institutions, and even entered into the private arrangements of social life. It is well understood, for example, that if the shop-keeper's family be not formally interdicted from entering our public assemblies, they would not be consulting their own interest or enjoyment by attending them, and the retailer would find it, probably, almost as difficult to gain admission to our clubs and our concert as he might to obtain the privilege of *entré* to the Queen's court. The *wholesale* dealer in fustians or fents, whose *bundles* occupy a garret or cellar, from which they only issue in the gross, may, however vulgar in mind or ill-bred in manners, gain admission without difficulty to places of privileged resort, from which the retail mercer or jeweller, with perhaps ten times the wealth, and whose vocation demands some refinement of manners and cultivation of mind, would feel himself excluded. What wonder, with these facts in view, if we sometimes meet with Tory-radicals or operative Conservatives!

¹ This was Mr. Edward Loyd, the banker, whose relation, Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd, was, in 1860, created Lord Overstone. W. E. A. A.

What wonder if the sincere democrat, finding a counterfeit aristocracy everywhere current, should grow bewildered at the sight of the spurious imitations, and, to escape deception, prefer such as bear the genuine stamp of nobility!

How different from the state of things just described is the condition of social life in the city of London, where all distinction of rank between the wholesale and retail dealer is unknown—where warehousemen and shopkeepers, if upon a par in wealth, character, and education, meet at assemblies and clubs, or interchange domestic visits in a spirit of perfect equality. But in the city of London, where you will find no manor Court Leet diffusing its tone of feudal insolence and slavish servility, there is a corporation renowned for its liberal character; and more than a moiety of its common councilmen, and several of the aldermen, are shopkeepers. The celebrated Alderman Waithman, who served the high offices of Sheriff of Middlesex and Lord Mayor of London, and was long a member for the city, was a linen draper, and the business of his shop is still carried on at the corner of Fleet Street by his sons. At the shop formerly occupied by Alderman Birch, the pastry cook,

in Cornhill, you may still refresh yourselves with buns or halfpenny biscuits; and the present Lord Mayor of London, now Sir John Cowan, Bart., who received a visit from the Sovereign herself, and whose lady entertained Her Majesty and the princesses with such admirable dignity, is a dealer in candles; his shop is in the Poultry, directly opposite to the Mansion House, which induced some waggish Cockney, on the day of his installation as Lord Mayor, to write upon his window, "*Removed over the way.*"

But another of the difficulties in the way of finding proper persons to fill the offices of boroughreeve and constables remains to be noticed. There has been a tacit, if not an avowed, exclusion of Dissenters from these appointments. No person has yet been allowed to fill the post of boroughreeve who would not attend at the Collegiate Church every Sunday, and thus afford his official sanction to the High Church and high Tory doctrines which are said to be promulgated from its pulpit. One of the merits of the new Corporation Charter, and not its least, is that it recognizes no distinction of sects; and if, to use the language of one of the speakers¹ at the late meeting to

¹ Mr. Wills.

petition for the incorporation of Birmingham, "the Dissenters should avail themselves of this and every other fragment of power to counterpoise the influence brought into play against them," then I need not doubt of the active co-operation of that most influential body in Manchester when I say to them more especially—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH.

Having thus taken a hasty glance at the present mode of governing this town, and also endeavoured to give a slight sketch of the leading characteristics of the Municipal Corporation Reform Act, sufficient facts are before the reader to enable him to come to a decision upon the respective merits of the two systems. It remains for the inhabitants of Manchester to determine whether the control over the police of the town shall remain in the hands of individuals, nominated by the irresponsible jury of an antiquated Court Leet, convened by private summons, and sitting in an obscure and dingy apartment, or huddled together in a stairs closet; or whether the municipal officers shall be chosen from amongst the best and most popular men in the borough, in open day, and in public assembly, after a full discussion of the merits of the respective candidates, by the people, who will afterwards support them in

their authority, and to whom, in return, they shall be responsible. Such is the choice submitted to the people of Manchester. Is there a party, or is there a man amongst us who will hesitate to raise his voice in favour of democratic self-government? If there be such a man, mark him, for whatever his professions may be, depend upon it he is not at heart a reformer or a friend of the people. The new corporations are trades' unions in opposition to the corn-law tyrants—the "*landed interest*"; they are normal schools of agitation for the education of orators and patriots; "they are" (to use the words of Thomas Attwood, Esq., M.P., uttered at the late meeting at Birmingham, before referred to) "real and legal political unions in every borough, and they accomplish things much better than the Political Union, which is very difficult to move, and attended with great hazard and expense into the bargain." Such being the nature and tendency of the new corporations, you may be assured, if the proposal to apply for one for Manchester be resisted, the opposition will not come from the sincere reformers. The shopkeepers, to a man, will support the plan, because its immediate operation will tend, as has already been shown by the example of London, to

elevate them to their proper level in the social scale, and afford to the public-spirited individuals of that most influential class an enlarged field of usefulness. The Dissenters of almost every sect will, on this as on all other occasions, be found on the side of wholesome reform. Who, then, will oppose the incorporating of the borough? They, alone, who resisted so strenuously the passing of the Municipal Reform Act; they who thwarted the commissioners in their inquiries into the corruptions of those dens of iniquity, the old corporations, in 1834, and afterwards defended the rotten boroughs, by counsel, at the bar of the House of Lords in 1835; they who petitioned the peers to deprive the bill of some of its best provisions, and procured the insertion of the odious qualification clause for councillors; they who now refuse corporations to Ireland; they who entailed upon Liverpool, Norwich, and the rest of the boroughs the curse of their venal freemen; they, THE TORIES, will, by every art, manœuvre, and device oppose the attempt to incorporate your borough. They know that at an election of councillors and aldermen not three out of the sixty-four of our members of the town council will be Tories; they know this, and therefore they will wisely and

consistently oppose the incorporation of the borough.

But they will take care not to come forward in their own character; they will resist your efforts under the guise of respect to the people; they will fight you under the false colours of economy; they will pretend to be the *tribunes of the poor*; and probably cover the walls of the town with handbills, calling upon us to beware of a Bourbon police, poor-law unions, and bastiles; or they will repeat the story placarded throughout Birmingham the day before the great meeting there, "that the Government will not grant a corporation unless we agree to spend £17,000 a year!" All these and a thousand other tricks will be resorted to by the Tories to cover their real designs of keeping down the people and retaining all the power in their own hands. But they will fail here as signally as they did in the town hall of Birmingham; for, when the time for holding the public meeting arrives, not a single Tory will attend our town hall, as was the case in the above instance, to witness the enthusiastic and unanimous vote in favour of a petition to the Privy Council to incorporate the borough.

But the Tories have a plan of their own for electing municipal officers, as a substitute for

the barbarous and even Tory-condemned Court Leet; they have proposed, by their organ of the press, that the boroughreeve and constables shall be elected from the same body as the commissioners of police; they would, in fact, retain for Manchester the £16 qualification, whilst all the corporate boroughs in the kingdom elect their town councils by household suffrage! Such is the magnanimous proposal of the Tories to the housekeepers of Manchester; and should their patrons, Wellington and Peel, possess themselves of office, such is the sort of local government which we might expect them to inflict upon us. Reformers of Manchester! if you would secure yourselves against such a calamity, be prompt in your imitation of the example set you by the Radicals of Birmingham; they are nearer to St. James's and Downing Street by little less than one hundred miles than you, and have better channels through which to learn the intrigues of courtiers, and the machinations of parties; a whisper, a *billet-doux*, might in an instant change a Ministry, and metamorphose the state policy of this great empire. Secure for your town, then, the advantages of a free and democratic government!

The *cost* of a good municipal administration

must depend altogether upon the discretion of the burgesses in electing prudent and economical councillors to manage their affairs. The housekeepers of Leeds, Liverpool, and the neighbouring borough of Stockport are found capable of choosing honest councillors and aldermen; and I contend, notwithstanding the opinion of the Tories to the contrary, that the people of Manchester are also to be trusted with the selection of their public officers. It will be the fault of the housekeepers themselves if they allow their own servants to be extravagant in the expenditure of their money. As to the *ability* of Manchester to support a municipal government, whilst such places as Bath, Ipswich, St. Albans, and Scarborough possess corporations, I should be ashamed to offer an argument upon the subject. If the Tories be sincere in their alarm about the burdens which a corporation will impose upon the town—if they really believe, although one hundred and eighty boroughs in the British Empire are at this moment incorporated, some of which are, in extent, mere villages, that Manchester cannot or will not pay a similar price for the privilege of a good and free government—then let them subscribe from their wealth, and send a begging box abroad, that

funds may be raised to rescue their native borough from such a disgraceful distinction.

It is said that the inhabitants of Chorlton-upon-Medlock would object to have their township incorporated with that of Manchester. The reason stated is, I believe, that the rates in the former district are lighter than those in the latter; and that to amalgamate the whole would impose an increased burden upon the out-township. I do not know how far this is the fact, but I will assume it for sake of argument. It appears to me, however, that it is a very confined view of the whole matter. The population of Chorlton are so entirely connected with, and indeed dependent upon, Manchester, by business ties, that it is impossible the two can have separate interests. Let a person take his stand at the bottom of Lower Brook Street, or in Oxford Street, from eight to ten o'clock in the morning, and behold the multitudes of people who are passing during all that time to their places of business in Manchester; then let that person take his station at either of the same spots from five to seven o'clock in the evening and witness the tide of population flowing back again; and he will instantly be convinced, not only that the inhabitants of Manchester and Chorlton can-

not have rival interests, but that they are, in fact, identically the same persons; they are the inhabitants of Manchester by day and of Chorlton-upon-Medlock by night. Probably, in nine out of every ten of the houses in the principal streets of Chorlton, one or more male persons will be found who are engaged in business throughout the day in Manchester. It must be obvious, then, that as the owners and occupiers of property in the two townships are essentially the same, and as the equalization of the two rates could only increase the one by diminishing the other, no loss could be suffered by such parties, any more than the taking of money from one pocket to put it into the other would constitute a robbery. The same arguments apply, *prospectively* at least, to the clerks and other junior members of the trading community residing in Chorlton, who, although they are not at present occupying warehouses or offices in Manchester, are enjoying the prospect of doing so, and who are too enlightened to oppose an amelioration in local government, in which they are probably beyond all others ultimately interested.

There is one important fact in connection with this subject. It is enacted in the Municipal Corporation Act, that every person occu-

pying a warehouse, shop, house, or counting-house, in any borough, and living within seven miles of such borough, shall be a burgess thereof, and be liable to be elected to the office of Mayor, Councillor, Assessor, and all other offices in the Corporation; and should he refuse to serve he will be subject to a fine of one hundred pounds. It follows, therefore, that all the inhabitants of Chorlton-upon-Medlock who possess establishments in Manchester, will be members of the corporation, *even should the two townships not be united*, and so far from saving either money, or, which is more precious, *time*, by this separation of governments, they must submit to a sacrifice of one or the other, in consequence of their double allegiance; they must either consent to fill the public offices in both townships, or else pay the fines in one of them.¹

I am not going to pass over the numerous class of small shopkeepers and others in

¹ Much of this, and of that which follows, upon the subject of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, applies equally to Salford. Looking back over the list of boroughreeves and constables for that borough, I perceive that almost every individual who has served those offices during the last ten years has possessed an establishment in Manchester, and would have been, under a corporation, liable to fill all its public offices. I offer this as a fact, without grounding any argument upon it.

Chorlton-upon-Medlock whose interests are wholly confined to the district in which they reside. It might be said that they are not concerned in the question of incorporating Manchester; but it might be easily proved, that if the township of Manchester should be placed under the admirable provisions of the Municipal Corporation Reform Act, whilst Chorlton-upon-Medlock continued to increase in population without the advantages of such a charter, its government must necessarily, in time, become unsuited to so great a community; and, supposing such an inconvenient state of things to be perpetuated, until it were found that the police of the township were insufficiently regulated, it would prove a serious evil to its industrious inhabitants by deterring people of property from taking up their residence in it. It is said, however, that Chorlton is growing so rapidly in numbers that it will by and by contain nearly 100,000 inhabitants, and be entitled to a corporation of its own. But that township can only increase in population in consequence of the growth of Manchester, of which it must necessarily be still a suburb. It cannot possess the individual qualities of a distinct town. No one pretends that Chorlton-upon-Medlock will have an Exchange of its

own, or banks, or a post office, a theatre, a newspaper, or literary and scientific institutions, or news-rooms, or any of the usual concomitants of a great and independent community. But were the facts before stated urged in opposition, they must prove fatal to such a claim. If it were shown before the Privy Council, from statistical data, as might easily be done, that a great proportion of the inhabitants of Chorlton were already burgesses of the Corporation of Manchester, a distinct charter would, under such circumstances, certainly not be granted. It has, to be sure, been good-humouredly imputed to Chorlton-upon-Medlock that it has hopes of being a parliamentary borough! I hope, however, its active and public-spirited reformers will not detach themselves from their political brethren in Manchester until they have a more certain prospect than at present of possessing that privilege; we cannot afford to lose such valuable allies. It is to a number of intelligent and influential inhabitants of Chorlton, more than probably to all the voters besides (*and the fact speaks volumes to prove the identity of interests pervading the two townships*) that one, if not both of our borough members, are indebted for their returns.

But I have trespassed so long on your attention that I shall only add one other argument in favour of the object I am advocating; but it is an argument that will appeal not less to the reason than the sympathies of all who can feel for the sufferings of their oppressed and tortured fellow countrymen in the sister island. It is very well known that the Irish are contending for corporation reform; they are struggling to get rid of those legalized Orange Lodges, misnamed corporations, which harass them in every borough; they desire to elect their own municipal officers from amongst their patriotic and honourable fellow citizens, instead of having thrust upon them (to use O'Connell's words at the late Stockport festival) "some pitiful politician, making the day disagreeable by his party politics, and the night disgusting by the worst party toasts, who, after oppressing the people by day, insults them by night." But he is thwarted in the legislature, in his attempt to reform these rotten boroughs, by the Tories; and what is the favourite argument the latter use? why, that Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield have no corporations, and yet they are very prosperous and content! One of the purest of her patriots described to me, a few weeks ago,

in terms of glowing eloquence, how bitterly the people of Ireland feel and regret these appeals to the example of the greatest of our manufacturing towns. Irishmen inhabitants of Manchester! let us no longer continue to supply practical argument for tyrants; lend your aid to wipe out this blot upon the character of the town, and thus assist your great liberator in his battle for justice for Ireland! Once more, for all the reasons I have named, and for a thousand others I could if time permitted, mention, I repeat to the Reformers of Manchester—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH!

A RADICAL REFORMER.

CHAPTER V. A TOWN'S MEETING IN THE EARLY VICTORIAN PERIOD.

WITH the publication of "Incorporate your Borough!" there began one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of English local government.

It must be acknowledged that the pamphlet failed in its main intention of enlisting the sympathy of the extreme Radicals. They were always suspicious of the Whigs and were often ready to fight with those who would give them half of their desires, and to ally themselves with those who would refuse all that they demanded. The extremist in politics, unless he is gifted with saving common sense, is often the worst enemy of sober reform. So the advocates of a municipal charter had to meet the opposition of the leaders both of the Conservative and of the Radical element in the town—though the mass of the rank and file seem to have been wiser than their self-appointed guides.

At the meeting of the police commissioners, 10th January, 1838, there were several references to incorporation. Mr. James Wroe mentioned "a pamphlet supposed to be written by Mr. Cobden, in which a great many plausible arguments were used to induce the people of Manchester to incorporate the borough." Mr. Wroe insisted amid much laughter that any shopkeeper was able to fill the highest office. He



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believed that he could himself fulfill the office of boroughreeve equally well with any person in Manchester. He favoured a consolidation of the police acts. "Bad as we are, there is no town in the kingdom where the affairs are managed in a better manner. Are there not many that are much worse? . . . What benefit would it be to him if their respected chairman was seated there with a great big horse-hair wig on his head, a stuff gown upon his back, and a tawdry thing called a mace at his side, with a fellow-in-waiting, dressed up like a play-actor, to carry it away. He was getting too old to be pleased with such childish nonsense." The friends of incorporation issued six hundred circulars to persons in the various districts of the borough who were supposed to be favourable, and as a result there was a meeting "most numerous and respectably attended," at the Thatched House Tavern, 24th January, 1838, when it was resolved "that steps ought immediately to be taken for convening a public meeting and submitting to the inhabitants of this borough the propriety of petitioning the Queen in council for a charter of incorporation according to the Act, fifth and sixth William IV, cap. 76." The committee then appointed drew up a requisition to the borough-

reeve, and it received the signatures of about a thousand ratepayers. The boroughreeve and constables called the meeting for 9th February, 1838.

In the meantime Mr. Cobden addressed a series of questions to the Town Clerk of Stockport. One question was: "Would a corporation, by bringing periodically the housekeepers of all classes together for the purposes of canvassing, selecting councillors, etc., tend to give consolidation to the Liberal party, and to elevate the character and influence of the parliamentary non-electors by such an amalgamation?"¹ Mr. Coppock's letter in answer, dealing with the results of incorporation, was circulated as a document in the campaign that followed.

The opponents of incorporation were also on the alert. The walls were covered with placards until, as the "Manchester Guardian" observed, "the bill-stickers had no resource but to cover one tissue of falsehoods by pasting a newer and equally false placard over it." The corporators were charged with desiring to introduce "a Bourbon police," to cram the "new poor law" down the throats of the people, and to cause unlimited expense. The pro-

¹ "Manchester Guardian," 24th January, 1838.

COPY OF CIRCULAR INVITATION TO CORPORATION
MEETING, FEBRUARY 9TH, 1838.

CORPORATION MEETING, TOWN HALL,

ON FRIDAY MORNING, FEB. 9th, AT 10 o'clock.

SIR,

The Committee most earnestly request that you will attend with your friends at the above meeting, to support the resolutions in favour of a Municipal Corporation, which will secure to Manchester a charter of self-government the same as that lately petitioned for by the people of Birmingham, and already possessed by every other great town in the kingdom ; by which the affairs of the borough, the control over its expenditure, and the election of local magistrates, will be placed in the hands of the leypayers at large, each of whom will then be entitled to one vote, and one vote only, without any reference to the amount of his assessment.

I have the honor to remain,

Sir,

By order of the Committee,

GEO. WILSON,

HON. SECRETARY.

P. S.—Please not to be later than 10 o'clock.

*Copy of Circular Invitation to Corporation Meeting,
February 9th, 1838.*

moters were stigmatized as "base, bloody, and brutal Whigs." A variant of this description was to call them "devilish Whigs." The Municipal Corporations Act was described as "infamous" and "infernal." Some of the opponents obtained admission to the Town Hall before the doors were opened to the rate-payers at half-past ten. Mr. John Brown, the boroughreeve, took the chair, supported by the two constables, Mr. John Ferguson and Mr. David Price. The attendance was large at the beginning and continued to increase, and it was estimated that there were nearly 2,000 present. A very full report appeared in the "Manchester Guardian," 10th February, 1838, and is here reproduced.

The boroughreeve asked for a quiet and temperate discussion, and warned the opposition against any uproar, noise, or disturbance.

Mr. Richard Cobden then came forward, and was loudly cheered. He said: Mr. Boroughreeve and gentlemen, I have the honour to propose the first resolution to your consideration this day. It is as follows: "That it is due to the character of this important borough that its chief municipal officers should be a body popularly chosen, instead of being nominated by the Lord of the Manor's Court Leet; and

that, as a preliminary step to the establishment of a responsible local self-government, a petition be presented to Her Majesty in council for a charter of incorporation, under the Act, fifth and sixth William IV, cap. 76, called 'The English Municipal Act.'"

If there be any individual present who differs from the spirit of this resolution we shall be glad, in due course, to hear his reasons and arguments against it. We have met this day to discuss a question of vital importance, not merely to ourselves, but to those who will come after us in this metropolis of the manufactures of England; and upon our decision this day must depend very important results, for ages to come, to this population. (Hear.) Let me, then, back the request of our excellent chairman, and beg that this important question may be discussed as one submitted to rational beings, and not to be clamoured down. Now, it may happen that from this side of the room observations may come, levelled at the offices of boroughreeve and constables, which will have no reference to the individuals who now fill these offices, and I should wish that, in anything said on this side, it may be borne in mind that we have no wish to offer any slight to those respected individuals who, much

against their own wishes, have been dragged to fill those offices, I fervently hope and believe for the last time. (Hear.) We have not met here to offer a groundless attempt at change—we are not seeking novelty for the sake of novelty, or to overturn old institutions merely because they are old; but because the old state of the government of Manchester is so decrepid and worn out, that it has actually fallen to pieces, and gone to the death, as it were. (“No” and “Yes.”) I once sat at the Lord of the Manor’s Court Leet, and there, in the company of gentlemen of all politics and shades of opinions, we came to the unanimous conclusion that, whether you adopt a corporation act, or the extension of your police acts, or whatever change you intend, a change you must have; for the old state of things cannot exist any longer. Well, then, shall we go to parliament and ask for an extension of the police acts? (“Yes, yes,” from the opposite side, answered by “No, no.”) Shall we go on, as it has been proposed by the Tory newspapers—that the Lord of the Manor, sitting in his parlour at Rolleston Hall, Staffordshire, shall rule the town of Manchester, its people not only putting his livery on, but widening the extent of their feudal servitude, and very probably al-

lowing him to make vassals of the people of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, Hulme, and other adjoining townships? Shall we do that? ("No, no," and groans.) I warn those gentlemen who are making a noise, and whose faces I have never seen before, that their interruption of the proceedings will not benefit their cause. I repeat, the Corporation Act is already enjoyed by every other large town in the kingdom, except Birmingham, whose petition for it is now before the Privy Council. And if we determine to consider this question, let us have reason, and no clamour. You are told that this corporation will bring great expense upon your shoulders. Was there ever so groundless a charge? Why, it was passed with the very view to give economy to town government, to deprive the oligarchy of their power in two hundred and fifty of our large towns, and to put that power into the hands of the people themselves. And shall we be told, by individuals who do not usually assemble here, that if the people have all power and control over their own affairs they will heavily tax and ruin themselves? Can any one assert this but the vilest of the vile, those who are hired by the ignorant, stupid Tories to clamour here? ("Shame," laughter, cheers, and groans, in the midst of which Elijah Dixon

was very vociferous, but the chairman with his hand intimated that he could not then be heard.) I do not seek this as a party measure, but as one which should carry out the great democratical principle that men shall govern themselves. Let us see what this Corporation Act is before we adopt it. Every householder, for three years, paying however small an amount of rate, is a member of the body corporate, and has an equal vote for the election of councilmen, aldermen, and mayor. ("No," from the Tory Radicals.) I am aware that misrepresentations have gone abroad, but I pledge my word of honour that by this act every individual, however low his assessment, shall have one vote, and that an individual possessing three or four warehouses, even if he be assessed at £10,000 a year, can have but one vote. ("Hear" and "No.") The burgesses are required once a year to elect one-third part of the council; which being elected for three years, one-third of its number retire every year; and thus every year there will be that delightful agitation which I love to see—an election of one common councilman for every ward—just enough to remind the other two, if they don't behave themselves, that their turn is coming. There are forty-eight councillors in Liverpool, and that

would be the number in Manchester; and these being elected, proceed to elect sixteen aldermen. The aldermen have no power or voice beyond the councillors, sitting and voting with them, except that they are elected by the men whom you would elect, and that in the absence of the mayor they may take precedence and prevent smaller men from quarrelling about precedence with them. At their own board they elect the mayor, who would be the chief magistrate of this town, having precedence even over the Queen herself, if she should come to the borough; while the Lord-Lieutenant of the county would be second to him in the borough. He would preside at all your courts of justice, and be your supreme ruler, and yours only. Can there be anything more democratic or republican than that? ("Yes," "No.") Why, the corporation of New York is upon the same principle—councilmen, aldermen, and mayor. And the government of the United States is upon that principle. It is universal suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ticket, if not vote by ballot. You, who have to elect councillors, aldermen, and mayor, take care to choose discreet, proper persons; and, having watched their course, and known their public and private character, set them to work. But we are

told they are to ruin you with expense. They would not have as much to do as our present officers. The mayor would take the place of the boroughreeve; the aldermen, of the constables, and immediately the new corporation was elected, the mayor would give notice to the present body to give up to them the possession of the police office. But I do not disguise from you that this Corporation Act will be but a preliminary step to all the powers of this town, whether lighting, paving, or what not, passing into the hands of the council; for two bodies, one working by household suffrage, and the other by a £16 qualification, could not co-exist. It has been tried and failed in Stockport, where the test was, that all should be done to make the commissioners merge their powers in those of the council at the second election. That is now done. By a majority of two they transferred the paving, lighting, and gas to the council; and so it will be in Manchester. ("They have not got it yet.") It is said all this will be productive of very great expense—you will have new courts for police courts, quarter sessions, and assizes. Now you need have nothing of the kind unless you wish. Nothing of the sort is compulsory. Your council will have the power of

nominating justices of the borough, and the Queen in council will confirm the nomination you make. It is not a part of the Corporation Act that there should be magistrates because there are common councilmen, but the present Ministry resolved, under date 1st October, 1835, that at all town councils, if the town council will nominate such gentlemen as they think proper to be included in Her Majesty's commission of the peace, the Queen in council is to give due consideration to it. And since that, the appointment of every liberal magistrate nominated has been confirmed by the Privy Council, and it may, to all intents and purposes, be considered as a law, and no government will dare to depart from that precedent. But do not suppose, because you have magistrates, that therefore it will entail expense upon you. There are individuals who will be proud to be nominated, and will be glad to be mayor or aldermen, free of expense to you, for the honour you will thus confer upon them. This is the distinction between a popular government and our present one. We had to drag our present worthy boroughreeve to the office he holds as a victim to the sacrifice; while in Liverpool, Leeds, Hull, Bradford, and other large towns, the candidates for the office

of councillors went into the streets and lanes with their hats off asking for votes. Is there no advantage, apart from the pounds, shillings, and pence view of the matter, in the poor man having the power of saying, "That mayor, those aldermen, and these councillors and magistrates are my appointment"? Is there nothing in that calculated to raise men from being under the bad advice of others—to place them above those who call themselves their leaders, and who would treacherously deceive them? That will bring men together with those who will advise them better; thus raising our whole town to a wholesome state; taking those victims out of the power of interested leaders, and giving them the power to lead and govern themselves. (Loud cheering.) Yes, I trust it is the last time, at such a meeting as this, that leaders, such as I have described, will come here, pretending to represent the interests of the people. (Hear.) I trust your own officers, when appointed, will serve you gratis, as is the case at Leeds, Liverpool, Hull, and other large towns. It is not theory or speculation, the thing has been tried; and I appeal to the example of upwards of two hundred towns in the kingdom, from none of which has there been one complaint of the Corporation Act,

except from the Tories. The people universally have been satisfied with their officers; and, moreover, let me add, the mayor and aldermen of Manchester, if chosen by the people, will rank as high as any baronet, ay, or lord. There is but one appointment that will necessarily be a salaried office—that of town clerk. Your treasurer, your assessors, councilmen, aldermen, mayor, and magistrates will all be happy and proud to serve you for nothing, and will besiege you for your votes too. I say, give your town clerk a salary, don't let him have fees to the amount of 6, 8, or £10,000 a year. Give him a sufficient salary, and you will save from another lawyer's office, that I need not name, £3,000 a year by the appointment of town clerk; for you will then have the surplus fees paid over to your borough fund as in Stockport; and they will go towards diminishing and meeting those expenses to which you have hitherto been subjected. But we are told there is to be a quarter session here. I say, no such thing. We don't ask for a quarter session; we ask only for the Corporation Act. If you afterwards wish to have a quarter session, you can then ask for it; but there is no more need to have a quarter session, because you have a Corporation

Act, than there is now. If you cannot get in this town rooms for a police court for your magistrates to sit daily, let the town sue to me, *in forma pauperis*, and I will give them two rooms in my house, and a dry cellar into the bargain for a lockup, big enough to hold all the operative Conservatives in Manchester. (Cheers and laughter.) You have no necessity to appoint any such officer; and I repeat that if you give your town clerk a salary of £2,000 you will save £4,000 out of an office that I won't name. Let me ask you where do these placards come from for which £200 has been paid within the last twenty-four hours in order to spread lies against the Corporation Act? Do you think the individuals who are here to plead the cause of despotism can afford to pay for these placards? ("No.") I tell you, in all frankness, that I think the Corporation Act the most democratic measure upon our statute book. I don't say it is perfect; I think it absurd that magistrates should be appointed without any qualification, and that aldermen and councillors should be required to have £30 houses or £1,000 in money or other property. But this would be much more felt at St. Albans than here, for I think my countrymen are much too apt to select rich men to

fill all offices. In St. Albans there are only twelve or sixteen councillors; and probably three or four aldermen, and it is very difficult to choose rich men there who are not Tories. In Manchester there would be no such difficulty, because up to this time the most useful party in this town have been excluded from all places of honour on account of their principles; and many of them the most useful and the most successful in business, because they happen to be dissenters, are rigidly excluded, from that viler motive, because they dissent from the Church for conscience' sake. Is it not monstrous that you have never been suffered to have a Catholic, an Independent, a Baptist, a Unitarian, or a Methodist to be your borough-reeve? Why? Because he goes to chapel instead of to church to worship his Maker. Even to this day the Test Act is virtually existing in all its force in Manchester. I say, therefore, that you will have a wider range. Even amongst your richest men you will find liberal men, and therefore, though I abhor the property qualification in councilmen, that will be no barrier here to your electing faithful stewards. In the case of magistrates the poorest mechanic may be elected to sit upon the bench; and I hope to see men from humble

ranks, merely by the force of talent and character, raise themselves to sit upon the justice seat, and administer justice. By the courtesy of the chairman, and the rules of public meetings, I shall have an opportunity of saying a few words at the close of these proceedings. I will, therefore, only now entreat the friends of the Corporation Act not to let themselves be tired out by mere talk, and then run away to their dinners. I hope every man who has the good of Manchester at heart will remain here to the end of these proceedings. I may be followed by persons utterly ignorant of the subject before us; but you will hear them. If they will go through the Act, and explain it, and talk of it only, then I will beg their pardon and admit I have charged them wrongfully. But if they come here to rave about Canada, to rail about the Dorchester labourers, or to scream about the new Poor Law—(laughter, hisses, and cheers)—if they should talk about everything but the subject in hand—(Elijah Dixon screamed “Same as yow do”)—I know not the individual who seems to take this to himself; but you will judge for yourselves. The police commissioners of some out-townships may wish to represent to this meeting that their constituents are opposed to this

measure; but I happen to know that the majority of housekeepers in the out-townships are in favour of the Corporation Act. ("False," "Yes," and "No.") If they are opposed to it, I will declare, on my honour, that, so far as I am concerned, I will not force them to join us. But we shall go from house to house, and take the signatures; we shall not take the word of any police commissioner, who comes here without his regiment, to say that his township is unanimously resolved to oppose it. But what are the objections that the smaller number in the out-townships raise to this measure? They say that we shall be riding over Chorlton-on-Medlock; that we shall be governing Hulme. Nothing of the kind. We offer them a fair and free partnership; and if they are afraid to join us, it must be either because they think themselves great simpletons, or us very clever fellows. But the chance is fair for all; and we shall not tyrannize over them. But this is silly opposition in another point of view. Taking the principal streets of Chorlton-on-Medlock, nine of their inhabitants out of every ten are the inhabitants of Manchester by day, and of Chorlton-on-Medlock by night. (Hear, hear.) Then, can there be anything more preposterous than that their little great

men should come here and say, "For the sake of our being great men in a little way, we will have a barrier across at the Medlock so that the little rogues who have stolen peas or beans on the one side may run over the bridge and say to the police officer or the watchman, 'You dare not follow us'?" I am astonished that men who have wisdom enough to govern Chorlton-on-Medlock should ever hold such strange ideas. I should as soon have expected that the worthy shopkeepers of St. Ann's Square, or of Ancoats Street should wish to have their shops by day under one government, and their dwelling-houses upstairs or at the back under another government by night. But such conduct had been well characterized by Mr. Coppock, who had said that there was a certain number of small men who made great men in Chorlton-on-Medlock, and who feared, if this Act were adopted, they would not make great men in Manchester. (Laughter.) I will only add, that I hope every speaker will keep as true and as tight to the subject as I trust I have done. (Loud cheers.)

C. J. S. Walker, Esq., said he had great pleasure in seconding the resolution. He did not come there to take power from one party in order to put it into the hands of another;

but he did come there for the purpose of taking power out of the hands of a party to put it into the hands of the people; and, if he did not think the Corporation Act would not be of great use to the town, he should be the last man to support it. (Hear.) He had no personal interest in the question; no desire or ambition to become either common councilman, alderman, or mayor; but he did desire to see the people of Manchester having the power of choosing their own officers, and that these officers should no longer be the nominees of any individual. He should have great pleasure in Manchester possessing the Act, because every leypayer, however humble, would have as much power in electing as the richest inhabitant. It was no Sturges Bourne's act, no bricks against brains; but intelligence in the poor going hand in hand with intelligence in the rich. He confessed he did not know much of the affairs of the out-townships; he believed the people of Hulme were exceedingly dissatisfied with their police act. ("No" and "Yes.") Why, there, if a man was assessed at a certain sum; he was a police commissioner by right, in virtue of that assessment, without going to the people for election at all. Was that the sort of qualification for the people? No; and he must

declare it would surprise him, after labouring and talking so much about household suffrage, [if] those men, who always professed to be great patriots, should come forward, calling themselves the friends of the people, and yet be so inconsistent as to oppose household suffrage. He knew that sometimes the people might happen to elect those whom they ought not to elect: but if they chose any one of this sort they would soon come to their senses, and they could then, under the Corporation Act, soon get rid of them. For these reasons the resolution had his cordial support. (Cheers.)

Mr. James Taylor addressed the meeting at some length, declaring himself the representative of the ratepayers of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, and complaining that the out-townships had not been treated fairly in calling this meeting at so short a notice. He was an enemy to the incorporation of Manchester, feeling confident that it was merely sought after for a party purpose, and that it would be the means of increasing taxation, creating useless and expensive offices, such as recorder, town clerk, treasurer, constables, and such other offices as an irresponsible body might, for interested purposes, think proper to appoint. If the ratepayers of Chorlton-upon-Medlock considered

for a moment that the proposed bill would be mutually advantageous, or that it would not be actually injurious to themselves, he, as their representative, would not be found opposing it.

Mr. James Wroe delivered himself of an harangue more than usually long, prosy and tedious. He called Mr. Cobden's assertions a bundle of fallacies, which he felt himself called upon to contradict. The object of Mr. Cobden, and of those with whom he stood, was to ride rough-shod over his (Mr. Wroe's) party, and, in doing so, over the people. What was the bill to do? To transfer the management of the town from its present possessors, or those who were (as things now stood) eligible to become so, to sixty-four wiseacres of the new school. What was the grand boon looked for by those persons now so active in seeking for incorporation? Why, the chance of being hereafter advanced to the dignity of Mayor of Manchester. Could Mr. Cobden or any of his party deny it? Mr. Wroe then proceeded to argue that the proposed bill would, if carried into effect, grind down the working classes, increase the taxation in a ratio from six to ten, and become to Manchester the greatest curse that ever was inflicted on it. A more detestable, treacherous system never was propounded. Mr. Cobden

had gone to an Irish gentleman (Mr. Wyse) to instruct the men of Manchester, being aware of the shallowness of his own abilities, knowing himself to be a man without thought, a mere spouter to gain applause. (Loud and repeated cries of "Shame," "Question," etc.) He complained of ministers of religion being ineligible to become common councilmen, or to have any voice in the distribution of their own money. He considered they were better adapted for the office than any other class of persons, from their rank, intelligence, and the confidence placed in them by their respective congregations. He asked where was Mr. Cobden and his colleagues when he (Mr. Wroe) and his friends were fighting for the rights of the men of Manchester? They were not to be found—there was nothing heard of them until places in parliament were offered for sale to the highest bidder. The principle of the bill was said to be democratic; but he termed it the contrary, and compared the mayor, aldermen, and council, to king, lords, and commons. (Mr. Wroe here alluded to several ministers of the gospel, who, he said, were behaving like scoundrels; pointing to one who, he said, was interrupting him, and whom he threatened to name if he did not come forward like a man. Mr. Wroe was called

to order by the chair, but declared that he would not be put down by the meeting or by any cowardly assassin.) He then proceeded to enlarge on the powers given under the new Act to corporate bodies, and told the meeting, in the event of this town being saddled by this infamous Corporation Act with a mayor, aldermen, and council, they (the people) would have no power to prevent themselves being robbed. Those corporate officers could not be resisted in levying such taxes as they might think fit to an unlimited extent. He wished to know where Mr. Cobden obtained his wisdom; he might come there swaggering in his wealth, but that was no proof of his wisdom, and he told him that he had none. (Mr. Wroe's speech, which contained much more personal invective than argument, was frequently interrupted by the chairman and meeting calling him to order, and to keep to the question.) In conclusion, he moved the following amendment:

“That this meeting protests against this second attempt to force upon the people of this borough an enactment to provide for the regulation of municipal corporation in England and Wales; such bill not being congenial to the feelings, or adequate to the wants of the inhabitants

of the town of Manchester or the borough; and as it is the opinion of this meeting, that the leypayers should partake of equal eligibility in all local enactments. (Cheers and groans.)

Mr. Edward Nightingale said he felt great pleasure in contemplating the glorious majority by which they would, at that meeting, turn the Whigs to the right-about, and defeat their base attempt to foist on the people of Manchester, for their own purposes, the infernal and detestable corporation bill. He called upon the people not to be deluded by the vicious Whigs, whose tools were the promoters of this meeting. He warned them that their objects were to crush the rising liberties of Manchester, to commit robbery by taxation, and to coerce and keep down the people. Although the corporation proposed could not be restricted in drawing money from the pockets of the working man, and although neither could they, in any manner, be compelled to account for the expenditure of such money, yet they had it not in their power to pass even a bye-law without submitting it for approval to the King in council. So much, then, he said, for the democracy boasted of on the other side. He then touched on the Regulation Act and the new Poor Law, and was repeatedly called to order.

In reply to Mr. Cobden's observation that no dissenter ever held office in Manchester, Mr. Nightingale named Messrs. Bannerman, Barbour, and Lees. He said the intended corporation had their officers already appointed. For their mayor, Mr. Intelligence was a quality not essential; but Mr. Breeches Pocket was indispensable, and they had therefore chosen Mr. Thomas Potter. (Cries of "question, question," and "order," from the chairman and the meeting.) He called on the men of Manchester to resist the tyranny of the bloated rich, and to trust not to the truckling, vile, base, bloody, and brutal Whigs, but to range themselves fearlessly under the banner of liberty, and fight for their just rights.

Mr. Prentice, on coming forward, was assailed by all the clamour of the Tory Radicals. He said the simple question was, whether the government of this vast town should be in the hands of the rate-payers at large, or of Sir Oswald Mosley. He reminded Mr. Nightingale of his motion for the reduction of Mr. Lavender's salary, which had been negatived under Sturges Bourne's Bill by 1,814 persons recording 3,579 votes, and yet Mr. Nightingale came, five years afterwards, to contend that the present system, with Sturges Bourne's voting,

was better than the Corporation Act with household suffrage. (Mr. Nightingale rose and attempted to speak amidst cries of "Spoke" and the repeated calls of the chairman to him to desist; this he did reluctantly.) As to the gentleman who had assumed that he was the representative of all the people of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, and who had complained that the mayor and corporation would have power to tax the people, he (Mr. P.) would say that that was what the people had been always contending for—to be taxed by no man's nominees, but by their own representatives. If Chorlton-on-Medlock were in so happy a state, he was rather astonished that its police rates should be as large as that of Manchester. Did Mr. Taylor suppose any one else would believe his assertion that the inhabitants of Chorlton-on-Medlock, out of sheer hatred for the Corporation Act, rather than have it, would destroy their own elective franchise? Mr. Wroe had spoken of the forty-eight councillors as sixty-four miserable wiseacres; but if he (Mr. P.) had so called a council elected by the leypayers at large, what an outcry there would have been against the "base, bloody, and brutal Whigs!" Mr. Wroe had complained, too, of the high qualification for councillors, though it was only a

£30 house; while before Mr. Wroe could sit as a police commissioner his assessment (not the annual value of the house) must be £28; and of a publican, £56. The number of persons qualified under the Corporation Act, to be common councilmen, would be double the number now qualified to be commissioners of police. Were the affairs of this town still to be in the hands of Sir Oswald Mosley? Why, on one occasion, the steward of the Lord of the Manor had actually gathered together a jury, when it was found that some of them were men of liberal opinions. A deputation was immediately sent to Rolleston Hall to represent the danger of allowing such men to be on the jury. The chaise returned post haste, with this very extraordinary determination on the part of the Lord of the Manor: that his steward had exceeded his duty in nominating a single liberal man upon the jury. The steward was discharged then and there; another was appointed in his place; and the jury were dismissed, before the Bible was put into their hands, as being unworthy to perform their functions. And for the sake of this man, who drew £7,000 and perhaps considerably more from the town of Manchester, the greater part of it he (Mr. P.) believed unjustly, Mr. Wroe, Mr. Nightin-

gale, and Mr. Dixon came forward to protest against the Corporation Act. (Messrs. Wroe and Nightingale again endeavoured to interrupt the speaker, and to harangue the meeting; but they were not allowed to do so.) As to the office of town clerk, if he were an attorney he should be glad to pay £2,000 a year to have the office and take the fees. As to the alleged great expense of a corporation, he would remind the meeting that under the present system they had a Town Hall which had cost £50,000 and it had scarcely a room in it fit for public meetings. But at any rate it was ready for the reception of the officers chosen by the people; and he would prophesy that we should not have a corporation six months before the police commissioners would, by their vote, transfer this Town Hall to the new corporation. He did not say that the Corporation Act was perfect; but the choice was between it, with a broad and widely extended suffrage, and Sir Oswald Mosley's government without any suffrage at all.

Elijah Dixon said he belonged to a township which contained a greater population than many of the incorporated towns in England. That township was Newton; and in Newton they were peaceable, and could manage their own affairs. They required no incorporation

with Manchester; but, on the contrary, they one and all opposed it. He denounced the bill, not as democratic, but infernal; not as bad as Sturges Bourne's act, but as far worse. To concoct this bill the devil had ransacked his brains, and no doubt felt proud of his bantling. (Cries from the crowd, "Don't screech," and "What are you talking about?") He prophesied that this bill would dissolve society; and declared that the reported tyranny of the Lord of the Manor was all fudge, and not deserving of attention. He proceeded for some time in a similar strain, and concluded amidst loud calls of "Question" and "Order."

Mr. Cobden rose to reply, but gave way to Mr. James Barrow, of Deansgate, who mounted the table and continued to talk for some time without any one being able to hear what he thought fit to say. At length, at the repeated request of the Chairman, he desisted.

Mr. Stephen Heelis (solicitor) said that according to the Corporation Act, no one could vote who was not the occupier of a warehouse, counting-house, dwelling-house, or shop; and therefore, as he only occupied an office, though he paid sufficient rates to have a share in the present municipal government of this place, he should have no vote under the Corporation Act.

Mr. John Doherty, in a speech of some length, attempted to combat the arguments advanced by Mr. Cobden. After deprecating the use of personalities, he begged of the meeting not to be influenced by that gentleman, who was merely put forward as a cat's paw. (Here Mr. Doherty corrected himself, and begged Mr. Cobden's pardon.) He declared his belief that such gentlemen as Mr. Cobden and others, who clamoured so much for a Manchester corporation, could be only actuated by the hope of hereafter assuming the dignity of the mayoralty, or of wrapping themselves up within the folds of the aldermanic gown. He called on the people to pause, and implored them not to consummate their misery by giving their consent to this odious measure. There was time enough. The town was peaceable; there was no insurrection; there were but few robberies. Their police could not be better managed; and, under these circumstances, he entreated them to wait another year or two until they saw how the bill worked in Birmingham; but if they would not do so, he begged of them, at least for the present, to waive the question.

Mr. Cobden replied: He felt much obliged to the last speaker, without whom he should

have felt a little at a loss to have discovered the precise tactics of the other side; but Mr. Doherty had let the cat out of the bag. He (Mr. Cobden) had charged the opponents of the Corporation Act with ignorance; and during the discussion they had well earned their right to the term. He would not say that Mr. Doherty had been hired to speak, though his name was at the foot of one of the placards put forth against the Corporation Act; but what did Mr. Doherty say? "We'll have this matter delayed." Why had the meeting been detained to so late an hour, but that the other party might go out and drum up their recruits? Delay was what was sought; and he (Mr. Cobden) had seen signals made by well-dressed men, and as much protraction and delay as possible on the part of the speakers, so that the friends of the cause of good municipal government had great reason to be grateful to those present who had stood out that weary day, and listened to such floods of nonsense. (Laughter and cheers.) Why were we to wait to see how Birmingham liked the Corporation Act? Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and a hundred and fifty other large towns had corporations; and after an experience of two years the people of these towns universally were

satisfied with them. The opponents of this measure called themselves radical reformers. He was a radical reformer too; and if they set up for radical reformers, he would tell them that they did not know their business. Why, the corporations of Hull and Newcastle had sent petitions from their town councils for universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and triennial parliaments; and those of Dumfries and Dundee had sent petitions for universal suffrage, shortening of parliaments, and the ballot. He called the Birmingham Political Union a radical association, and it had declared for the Corporation Act. If they looked at the public press of the town—"The Guardian," "The Times," and "The Advertiser," had all declared for a corporation. Who, then, were they that advocated the old system? One individual had talked of having a motion at the commissioners of police board for an extension of the suffrage. Why, he knew he might as well ask for the sun to come out and shine at midnight; and yet he opposed the Corporation Act with household suffrage. He was sure the meeting would not be carried away by appeals to their fears as to the expense of such corporation baubles as maces, cloaks, and chains; such things were gone by, and would never be

tolerated in Manchester; and as to these things, mace-bearers and dinners, the Corporation Act was intended to put an end to them all. They had been told that dissenters had been promoted to the office of boroughreeve. Perhaps one individual or two of the established Church of Scotland; but he asked any one to give him an instance of a Catholic, an Independent, a Baptist, a Unitarian, or a Methodist having been appointed to that office. He should be but mocking the intelligence of the meeting if he were to attempt to answer, not the arguments, but the ravings of the other side. He looked upon the result of this day's meeting as a glorious one; for now the men who pretended to be radical reformers would be obliged to become rational radicals if they wished to keep their name. He called upon the leypayers, as they valued their political freedom, to lend a hand in promoting a measure which was not merely a step, but a mighty stride in the progress of freedom. Those who loved liberty of conscience would vote for the measure; and those who were afraid of the people—those who, under whatever pretence, kept the people down, either that they might trample on them, or pretend to lift them up—would oppose it. It was the rule for the

boroughreeve to put the amendment first; and as they might not hear distinctly he would keep on his hat till the original motion was put, that all who wished for a Corporation Act might then, and not till then, hold up their hands.

The Chairman then read and put the amendment, for which scarcely one-third of those present held up their hands, the opposing party being closely congregated around Mr. Wroe, Elijah Dixon, and Co., near the window to the Chairman's left, and a few here and there on the same side of the room, while there were not a dozen hands raised on the Chairman's right. The Chairman next put the original motion, when a very great majority of hands was raised; being almost a unanimous vote as to the right side of the Chairman, which was a larger body than that on the other side of the table dividing them; while, even on the Chairman's left there was a very numerous body (intermingled with the Tory Radicals) who voted for the original motion. The Chairman, after the cheering had subsided, said: That no disappointment may arise on the mind of any gentleman present I have requested my colleagues (the constables) on each side of me to join me in opinion as to the majority and

minority on both motions; and I am bound to say, in conjunction with the opinion of my colleagues, that the original motion is carried. (Immense cheering.)

Mr. Alexander Kay moved the appointment of a committee to carry the resolution into effect. Mr. W. R. Callender said that as an inhabitant for fourteen years of Chorlton-on-Medlock and a retiring police commissioner of that township, having seen the great inefficiency of some of its departments, particularly the watch committee, of which their worthy friend, Mr. James Taylor, was chairman (hear), he had great pleasure in seconding the resolution. It passed with about half a dozen dissentients.

The boroughreeve having left the chair, and Mr. John Ferguson, senior constable of Manchester, having been called thereto, Mr. Cobden moved the cordial thanks of the meeting to the boroughreeve for his very handsome and equitable conduct in the chair. The motion was carried with acclamation. The boroughreeve, in acknowledging the vote, said he had only done his duty. He had endeavoured, towards both sides, to conduct himself as impartially as his judgement would allow; and if he had erred he could assure them it was

only through misapprehension. He hoped that the proceedings of this day would redound hereafter to the benefit and advantage of the town. (Cheers.)

Three cheers were then given for Mr. Cobden; three groans were proposed for Mr. Wroe, but Mr. Cobden and his friends called out "No, no," and the attempt was abandoned. The proceedings terminated about three o'clock, having lasted four hours and a half, during which the great bulk of the leypayers were kept standing.

Such is the contemporary journalist's record of this meeting. Some of the speakers in opposition to the proposed Charter, men like James Wroe and Elijah Dixon, had rendered good service to the popular cause in other directions, but on this subject were hopelessly prejudiced.

Mr. Edward Nightingale was the landlord of the "General Abercromby" liquor vaults, Ancoats, and was a master of irrelevant oratory, who did not apparently think it was any disadvantage that one portion of a speech should be in flat contradiction to another. Such men are invaluable in the art of gutter politics, and are of unspeakable disadvantage when they attach themselves to a good cause.

CHAPTER VI. THE STRUGGLE FOR A MUNICIPAL CHARTER.

IN addition to the Town Hall meeting in Manchester, others were held in various out-townships with varying results. At some the Corporators were successful and at others they were defeated. The amenities of life in Chorlton-on-Medlock were illustrated in a speech by Mr. William Romaine Callender. Replying to the assertion that their police system was efficient he mentioned the case of a ratepayer whose house was robbed, and who had called every day from Monday to Friday at the Chorlton police office before he could get the assistance of an officer. Another householder had been robbed by thieves who escaped into Manchester and he had then to appeal to the Manchester police by whom they were ultimately apprehended. Whilst one of the deputy constables was obtaining signatures against incorporation, a house was robbed and no police officers could be found at the Town Hall: a child was found dead in the street but no placards were posted for the detection of the culprit who remained unpunished. A man who had received money for the watering of Downing Street had absconded, and the commissioners had to send to Mr. Aaron Nodal to ask him how the matter stood. A shopkeeper detected a thief in the act but though he sent to the Ardwick and

also to the Chorlton police offices he could not obtain an officer and the thief was released. The watchmen in the neighbourhood of Plymouth Grove were frequently found asleep within the porch of Mr. Callender's house and his departing guests had sometimes to step over these vigilant guardians of the peace. On one occasion the superintendent found one there and took away his staff, lantern, and hat without awakening him. Several of these Dogberries coming off their rounds in Oxford Road quarrelled and fought as to the custody of a large pin that one of them was picking up.¹

There was, however, in some breasts a genuine fear of a Municipal Corporation. One of the horrified churchwardens, Mr. Richard Gould, wrote to Mr. Mark Philips, M.P., asking why the member for Manchester had affixed his signature to a petition for a Corporation Charter which "would have a baneful influence upon the peace, and upon the morals, and upon the general prosperity of this commercial community."²

Cobden was one of the stewards for the celebration of the first birthday of Queen Victoria after her accession. This was celebrated

¹ "Manchester Guardian," 24th February, 1838.

² *Ibid.*, 18th April, 1838.

17th May, 1838, by a procession and public dinner presided over by Mr. John Brown, the boroughreeve. One of a multitude of toasts was that of "Sir Oswald Mosley, the Lord of the Manor of Manchester," and in proposing it the boroughreeve said "he should not be sorry when we abandoned him, for he thought the time was now come for a change." This was a significant evidence of the public feeling on the subject.

Meanwhile the petition for incorporation was being signed and on 10th March, 1838, Cobden proceeded by railway to London and was joined on Monday by Mr. William Neild. The petition, a sheet nearly one hundred yards in length, bore 11,830 signatures, and was deposited at the Privy Council Office. The Anti-Corporators replied by a petition which was said to have 31,947 signatures.

The petition for incorporation having been presented to the Privy Council 21st March, 1838, it was ordered to be taken into consideration on 1st May.

The commissioners to inquire into the contending petitions arrived in Manchester on 24th May, 1838, and took up their abode in the York Hotel, which then adjoined the Town Hall. Captain J. Jebb and Mr. Alexander

Gordon having had some unsatisfactory experience of holding such inquiries in open court, decided to exclude the general public, but admitted Mr. Cobden to represent the "Corporators," and Mr. James Crossley to be the mouthpiece of the "Anti-Incorporators."

As the inquiry divided into districts, Mr. George Wilson, Mr. William Neild, and Mr. George Smith also appeared for, and Mr. Thomas Flintoff, Mr. Henry Barker, and Mr. Moss against the Charter.

A meeting of the Tory committee was immediately summoned for their funds were already exhausted.¹ The scrutiny disclosed a curious state of affairs as the result of the union of extreme Radicals and extreme Tories. Some of the canvassers were engaged by the Conservative Association and were paid three shillings a day, and a commission of three shillings for every sheet of forty-two names. Mr. James Wroe, having in mind the Radical precept of economy, engaged Finney and Lonergan at the rate of three shillings and sixpence per day without any extra commission. On finding that they were so greatly underpaid, the two worthies attempted to make a fresh arrangement, and when this was refused

¹ "Manchester Guardian," 30th May, 1838.

they gave information to the Corporators of the way in which the opposition petition was being manufactured. That the art of petitioning was well understood came out in some statements as to a canvasser named Ainsworthy. "He war a weety leetle man," said a witness, "he could set down and write names, ay, for an hour or two; he never wanted nother directory nor nought—he'd do it aw from memory like. Poor fellow! he's dead, and it wur that petition as kilt him." Asked to explain he said that after the sheets had been sent into the Conservative office it was reported that there would be an inquiry, and Ainsworth had a letter to say that he must be prepared to prove the genuineness of the signatures. "He tow'd me," solemnly averred the moist-eyed witness, "that he war i' trouble and couldna face it. He didna know wheer to find th' names. They had no houses; how could they when he made them aw from his own yed? He ne'er looked up after, but hedrank sore of rum, and what wi' fear and spirits, he took t' 'is bed and died, and it wur nought but that petition as kilt him."¹

The "witty little man" was in debt to the extent of fifty shillings, and he induced his

¹ "Manchester Guardian," 23rd June, 1838.

creditor to fill up seventeen sheets with names, on the understanding that the debt was to be liquidated by the money paid for these additions to the petition. The "witty little man" obtained the money, but did not pay, and the angry creditor threatened an exposure, and so the Anti-Corporators had to pay twice over for these signatures. Such was the story current, and believed to be true. An attempt to prove similar practices on the part of the Corporators failed. A witness who was induced to come into the room turned tail before he had answered a single question, and ran away followed by Mr. Thomas Flintoff, who failed to bring him back.¹ After the conclusion of the inquiry he was brought to Captain Jebb's lodgings in

¹ "Manchester Guardian," 22nd June, 1838. Cobden, in a letter to William Tait, the publisher of "Tait's Magazine," gives a graphic impression of the struggle for the Municipal Charter: "When your former kind and friendly letter reached me I was engaged before the Commissioners employed in exposing the trickery of the Tories in getting up their petition against the Incorporation of our Borough. For three weeks I was incessantly occupied at the Town Hall. By dint of hard work and some expense we got at the filth in their Augean stable and laid their dirty doings before the public eye. I believe now there is little doubt of our being chartered before the next November elections and it will be a new era for Manchester when it shakes off the feudal livery of Sir Oswald Mosley to put on the democratic

Mosley Street, where he made statements and denied them with equal rapidity, and on being confronted with the Corporator whom he had accused of joining him in the forgery of names, he recanted the accusation and had a pressing engagement which led him once more to make for the street. Several persons whose evidence

garb of the Municipal Reform Act. So important do I consider the step for incorporating the Borough that I have been incessantly engaged at the task for the last six months.

"I began by writing a letter of which I circulated five thousand copies with a view of gaining the Radicals by showing the popular provisions of the Act. Will you credit it? The low blackguard leaders of the Radicals joined with the Tories and opposed us! The poor law lunatics raised their *demented* yell and we were menaced with nothing but defeat and annihilation at the public meeting. However, we sent a circular to every one of the £10 parliamentary electors who support liberal men, calling upon them to aid us at the public meeting, and they came forward to our rescue. The shopocracy carried the day. Two or three of the Tory Radical leaders now entered the service of the Tories with a view to obtain the signature of their fellows to a petition against incorporation: they pretended to get upwards of thirty thousand names for which they were well paid; but the scrutiny has shown that four-fifths were forgeries. So much for the unholy alliance of Tory and Radical! I mention all this as my best excuse for not having written to you or for you for so many months. What with going twice to London on deputations and fighting the battle with two extreme political parties in Manchester I have been so constantly engaged in action that I have not had time for theorizing upon any topic."

the commissioners were anxious to hear were very conveniently absent from Manchester, and could not be heard from.¹

The result of the scrutiny was that 7,984 of the 11,783 signatures in favour of incorporation were accepted, whilst of the 31,947 against, only 8,694 were regarded as genuine. The Corporators naturally held that the counter-petition was vitiated by the wholesale system of forgery employed in its manufacture. Such also was the first impression of the Privy Council, for the grant of the Charter was recommended on 14th August, 1838. This was confirmed by the Queen in council on the following day. The Corporators were mortified to find that even after the confirmation of the Charter in council, the inquiry was to be reopened. Captain Jebb and two assistants, Messrs. Thomas and Maudson, came again to Manchester on 14th September, 1838, for further investigations. The Corporators, however, promised to give all the assistance in their power; the Anti-Corporators declined to take any part in the proceedings, but reserved themselves for an attack on the Charter in the law courts. Captain Jebb and his colleagues made many visits to the houses of the rate-

¹ "Manchester Guardian," 7th July, 1838.

payers, in order to test the validity of the signatures. They left Manchester 25th September, and on the following day the agent for the Corporators had word that the Charter would be forwarded as soon as the great seal had been attached.

At last the Charter was sealed and forwarded to Mr. William Neild as chairman of the Committee by whom the petition had been prepared. He submitted it to a meeting of the Committee, 25th October, 1838, and by their directions it was placed in the hands of Mr. David Price, who was named in it as the person who should prepare the list of voters. Mr. John Hyde, the boroughreeve, was appointed returning officer.

CHAPTER VII. THE CHARTER CONTESTED.

THE Tories and Radicals combined to reject candidates for the office of commissioners of police who were thought to be favourable to incorporation, and by the secrecy and "generalship" of their action they succeeded in the election, which took place in the week following that on which the Charter was received in Manchester.

There was a lively newspaper controversy. Mr. John Edward Taylor thought he detected in a leading article of the "Manchester Chronicle" the fine Roman hand of Mr. James Crossley, and replied in pungent terms in the "Manchester Guardian." Mr. Crossley sent a friend for an explanation, which Mr. Taylor refused unless Mr. Crossley would definitely disavow these articles. Mr. Crossley declined, but sent again a messenger, 17th November, 1838, bearing a challenge to a duel. The Editor of the "Manchester Guardian" had the good sense to decline this invitation, and the correspondence was then published by Mr. Crossley with the belated declaration that he was not in any way responsible for the attack in the "Manchester Chronicle." Amongst other reasons Mr. Taylor smilingly alleged, that whilst Mr. Crossley was a bachelor he was a married man with a family, and had heavy insurances

on his life. He added, "I object to duelling on higher grounds. I regard it as a very irrational and ridiculous, and even wicked, mode of settling disputes. It is worth nothing, as a means, either of investigating truth, or of repairing injury, and, as such, I object to it." These are sensible words, which were not so easily said in 1838 as now.¹

The Anti-Corporators issued a placard signed by Richard Gould, already mentioned, warning the people of Manchester "against doing any act that may be equivalent to a recognition of the Charter."

When the Revising Barrister, Mr. Edward Rushton, came to hear the claims, the use of the Town Hall was refused, and he held his Court in the Exchange Dining Room, 28th November, 1838. The churchwardens refused by letter to produce the rate-books. Mr. Rushton put aside this difficulty which the Anti-Corporators probably thought insuperable by declaring that he would take secondary evidence

¹ Notices of both challenger and challenged will be found in the "Dictionary of National Biography." To those who remember the corpulent figure of Mr. Crossley in his placid and learned old age, there is something grotesque in thinking of him handling duelling pistols and offering to the adversary a target that even the inexperienced could hardly fail to hit.

and admit all that were fairly made out. The work was proceeding when Mr. Crossley came into the room, and presenting a folded paper to Mr. Rushton, said, "I beg to hand you a protest against the legality of the Charter." Mr. Rushton: "And against my jurisdiction?" "Against your jurisdiction, sir." Mr. Rushton rejoined, "Well, sir, without the slightest wish to treat you with any discourtesy, I can only say to you, as Lord Ellenborough once said on a similar occasion, 'You must protest, and then go your way.' " The protest merely stated that those whom Mr. Crossley represented were "advised that such Charter is altogether invalid," but did not set forth the grounds of objection. Mr. Rushton began his revision on Wednesday and ended it on Friday, 30th November, 1838.¹

The first Municipal Election was held 14th December, 1838. In pursuance of the policy of not recognizing the validity of the Charter the Tories did not put forward candidates, and used their influence to prevent any votes being

¹ Rushton is understood to have drafted the Municipal Corporations Act. ("Letters of a Templar," 1903, p. 202.) A letter referring to his proceedings as Revising Barrister is given at p. 229 of that book, but owing to its lack of date is wrongly placed under 1836.



Emory Walker & Co

*Sir Joseph Heron, Kt.
The first town clerk of Manchester*



SIR JOSEPH HERON, KT., FIRST TOWN CLERK OF
MANCHESTER. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH CIRCA 1877.

given. The only contest was in New Cross Ward, where the ultra-Radicals could not resist the opportunity of a fight and were handsomely beaten. On the following day (15th December) the Aldermen were selected, and Mr. Cobden from Councillor for St. Michael's Ward, became Alderman for Medlock Street Ward. At a private meeting, when the claims of Mr. Potter and Mr. Neild for the mayoralty were voted upon, Mr. Potter had only a majority of one, but it was then decided to make his election unanimous. Cobden, who had proposed Mr. Neild at the caucus, now placed Mr. Potter's name before the Council and he was at once elected. The nomination of the Town Clerk, Mr. Joseph Heron, was also made by Cobden.

The Tory-Radical combination still refused to acknowledge the Charter. The Council applied for the use of the Town Hall for their meetings. The commissioners of police held a special meeting 9th January, 1839, to consider this momentous question, and discussed it from 11 a.m. to 2.30 p.m., when after "vehement" and "eloquent" speeches in opposition the accommodation was refused by 102 to 92. The result was attained in the usual manner by addition of six Radical votes to those of the Tories.

The most discreditable ridicule was poured upon the Corporation in a continual stream of abuse and vituperation. Thus Mr. William Read at the annual meeting of the commissioners of police, 30th October, 1839, observed: "The whole of the affair has originated in direct, base, political motives. Jobbery, jobbery ever has been and is identical with whiggery, whiggery; and if I may be permitted to parody the words of Milton, I would say of whiggery, that it is:

Job first, job last, job midst and without end."¹

A letter was read at the second quarterly meeting of the Council, 6th February, 1839, from Lord John Russell, intimating that he had recommended the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to appoint as magistrates the whole of the gentlemen nominated by the Council. There was one name added, that of Mr. Daniel Lee, a well-known and highly respected Roman Catholic merchant. The names included that of Richard Cobden.

Rival bodies of overseers were appointed. The Council elected Mr. James Chapman to the office of Coroner. Mr. Rutter the

¹ In the same speech Mr. Read mentioned Cobden as the "great author and father" of the incorporation scheme.

County Coroner began an action against him for trespass—in holding an inquest. Eventually the legality of the Charter was decided in the action of *Rutter v. Chapman*, and the Anti-Corporators were again defeated. At this distance of time the opposition to local government appears motiveless, but behind the question of principle there were considerable personal interests. Mr. Oswald Milne was a local lawyer, whose official positions brought him in a large revenue from fees, and these were likely to be diverted into other channels by the establishment of a Town Council. He was the adviser of the anti-reform party who had been in power so long that they resented any change that might interfere with their supremacy.

Whilst all this senseless opposition was in progress the police arrangements of the borough were in a state of uncertainty, an uncertainty all the more dangerous from the suffering caused to the working population by the Corn Laws and the protective system of which it was the symbol. The Government took action. A bill was introduced into the House of Commons empowering the Queen, pending the litigation, to establish a police office, and to appoint a Chief Commissioner of police. Incidentally this bill recognized the Charter, because the Commis-

sioner was to be sworn before two of the borough magistrates, and the power of the various townships for the levying of police rates was to cease, and any separate police forces were to cease during the continuance of the Act. The police rate under the bill was limited to eightpence in the pound. Against this bill the Tory-Chartist union petitioned, and the Duke of Wellington and Lord Brougham were primed with material for use in debate.¹

This anarchical policy was persisted in as long as it was possible to do so. Thus the "Manchester Chronicle" referred to "those towns unhappily afflicted with Whig Corporations," and rejoiced that "Manchester is yet happily exempt from the *incubus* of a Corporation." This was of course written on the assumption that the Charter was invalid. "We dare say," continues the able Editor, "Sir Thomas Potter, Mr. William Neild, and the other gentlemen who amuse themselves with playing at Aldermen and Councillors, entertained each other with some mimic ceremonies on the general municipal anniversary; but their child's play can interest no one but themselves, and we forbear to intrude upon their pastimes."²

¹ Hansard's Debates, 19th August, 1839.

² 4th November, 1840.

THE FIRST MAYOR OF MANCHESTER, THOMAS
POTTER, BORN 1774, KNIGHTED 1840, DIED 1845.
FROM A BUST IN THE MANCHESTER TOWN HALL
BY MATTHEW NOBLE.



Thomas Potter
the first Mayor of Manchester

The validity of the Charter was affirmed by the Court of Exchequer Chamber, after protracted argument, on 22nd February, 1841. Mr. Rutter threatened an appeal to the House of Lords. This was not persisted in, but an attempt was made to introduce special Manchester compensation clauses into the Criminal Justice Bill. The efforts of Mr. Wilson Patten to settle the matter by this side wind, excited much indignation and ended in failure.¹ Sir Frederick Pollock, then Attorney-General, advised the overseers of the various townships that the Charter must be presumed to be valid until upset by the House of Lords, "which he thought it would not be." This was in February, 1842. The opposition to the Charter had become a mere question of the compensation to be paid to the dispossessed County officials. The "Act to confirm the incorporation of certain boroughs and to indemnify such persons as have sustained loss thereby" was passed in August, 1842. Mr. W. S. Rutter in the end received an annuity of £277 4s. 8d. Mr. Robert John Harper claimed £19,351 os. 10d.

¹ A deputation from the Manchester Town Council circulated amongst members of parliament a statement of their objection to the compensation clauses. This is printed in the "Manchester Guardian," 28th April, 1841.

and received an annuity of £6 8s. Mr. Oswald Milne, the main-spring of the opposition to the Charter, claimed £34,724 2s. 6d. and received—nothing! The litigation over the Compensation clauses lasted until the end of the summer of 1844.

“We were three years at that work,” Cobden said, at a later period, “and at one time he [Neild] was £1,200 out of pocket, and I was between £700 and £800 deficient, but we got the Charter.” In the Charter’s defence it was necessary to give the bank a bond for £27,000 and of this sum Cobden guaranteed £500.¹

¹ Bolton, like Manchester, was governed by a Court Leet, and the necessity for a change was thought to be even more urgent there than in the larger town. The matter was discussed in private by Cobden, Thomas Potter, George Wilson, J. C. Dyer, and Henry Ashworth. A private tea party was first held and then a public meeting was called and a petition for incorporation adopted. Mr. Ashworth and two others presented the petition, the prayer of which, after an investigation, was granted, notwithstanding the opposition of the Earl of Bradford, who was the Lord of the Manor of Great Bolton, and of Mr. Tipping, the Lord of the Manor of Little Bolton, whose views were endorsed by Mr. William Bolling, M.P. for the borough, and by the Bolton Tories generally. The Bolton Charter was granted 5th March, 1838.

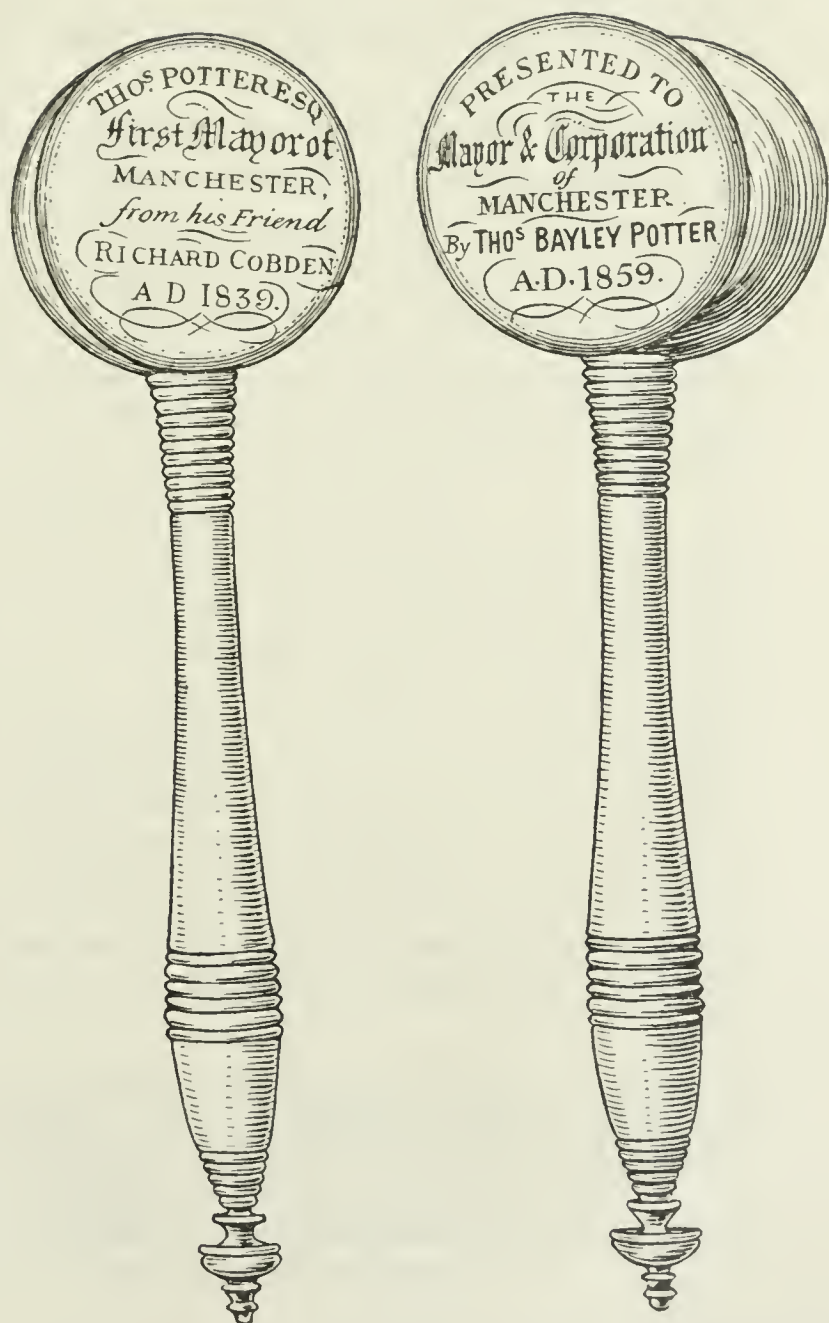
CHAPTER VIII. ALDERMAN
COBDEN.

C OBDEN presented to the first Mayor of Manchester, Sir Thomas Potter, the gavel for use in regulating the proceedings of the Corporation. It passed into the possession of his son, Sir John Potter a subsequent Mayor of Manchester, and on his death in 1859 was presented by his brother, Mr. Thomas Bayley Potter, M.P., to the City Council. It is not now in use but is carefully preserved in the Manchester Town Hall.

When it was seen that the incorporators must in the end win, affairs moved more rapidly. The powers of the commissioners of police under the various local acts were transferred to the Corporation which now, secure in its legal position, began a long series of improvements in the government of the town.

Cobden remained a member of the Corporation until 9th November, 1844. His election to Parliament in 1841 and the claims of the Free Trade movement hindered him from regular attendance, but his name occurs frequently in the earlier proceedings. He attended 22 out of 32 meetings of the Council in the first year, 4 out of 13 in the second, 5 out of 17 in the third, was absent from 15 meetings in the fourth year, from 20 in the fifth year, and attended 1 out of 23 meetings in the sixth year.

GAVEL PRESENTED BY COBDEN TO THE FIRST
MAYOR OF MANCHESTER. NOW PRESERVED IN
THE TOWN HALL, MANCHESTER.



Gavel presented by Cobden to the first Mayor of Manchester.

He was a member of the Town Council from 15th December, 1838, until 9th November, 1844.¹

Of Cobden's speeches in the Manchester Town Council one of the most important was that in which he moved the adoption of a petition in favour of the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. This speech, from the place in which it was delivered and the subject to which it relates, symbolizes Cobden's career—his services to the local community, to the nation, and the world.²

The Manchester Corporation soon began to negotiate with the Lord of the Manor for the abolition of his feudal rights. The manor was bought in 1596 by Sir Nicholas Mosley, who paid £3,500 for it, and he and his descendants enjoyed the revenue from the market tolls and other jealously guarded rights. In 1819 there was an effort made to purchase the manor for the town and the sum of £90,000 was named by the then Lord of the Manor as the price

¹ These particulars are given in "Chronicle of City Council from October, 1838, to September, 1879," an anonymous record, compiled by Mr. George Simpson and printed for private circulation.

² It is reported in the "Manchester Times" 3rd April, 1841, and was reprinted as a broadside.

he would accept. This effort failed and there was no renewal of the attempt until the incorporation of the borough. In 1845 the Town Council bought the manorial rights from Sir Oswald Mosley for £200,000. His receipts from the Manor were stated to be £9,000 yearly. The Court Leet held 15th October, 1845, was expected to be the last View of Frank Pledge of the Lord of the Manor, and Cobden, although he had ceased to be a member of the Corporation, was specially selected to be the Foreman of the Jury. When Mr. Alexander Kay, the Mayor of Manchester, had been elected boroughreeve, Mr. Cobden addressed the Court, and said "that probably he should not be considered by his fellow jurors as doing his duty if he allowed the present occasion to pass without expressing what he believed to be the feeling of the jury, their complete concurrence with the observations of the learned Steward and the great satisfaction they felt at the termination of the rights and privileges of this Court, which had lasted, he believed, for many centuries, and which was admirably suited to the times in which it was established, but which all parties admitted was quite unsuited to the requirements of the present day. He was sure there was but one opinion as to the character

of the arrangement made for the transfer of the manorial property, rights, and privileges both on the part of the Town Council and on that of Sir Oswald Mosley, and it was much to be wished that all necessary changes in our institutions might be made as tranquilly and with the same good feeling as in this instance.”¹

¹ It was, however, found necessary to hold one more formal meeting in April, 1846. The Corporation wisely secured as part of the purchase a number of documents relating to the history of the town, including the Manorial Charter granted in 1301 and the minutes of the Court Leet from 1552 to 1846. These, edited by the late Mr. J. P. Earwaker, F.S.A. (whose father was an inmate of Cobden's house when the pamphlet "Incorporate your Borough" was written) have been printed in twelve volumes. They form a curious and valuable contribution to the history of local government. In the earlier times the manorial system was adequate, but the growth of Manchester had rendered its continuance impossible. In the introduction, Mr. Earwaker has sketched the history of the struggle for the borough Charter. He was unable to find a copy of "Incorporate your Borough." An earlier statement is that in "An address delivered to the members of the Town Council of Manchester, on Monday the 10th of November, 1845, by Alexander Kay, the retiring Mayor," London, 1845. Particulars of local government of a later date are given in "An Historical Record of some recent enterprises of the Corporation of Manchester and of its co-operation in the completion of the Manchester Ship Canal," [edited by Alderman Harry Rawson] Manchester, 1894.

CHAPTER IX. COBDEN CEASES TO BE A CITIZEN OF MANCHESTER.

AT the Midsummer election in June, 1841, Cobden unwillingly became for the second time a candidate for the parliamentary representation of Stockport. The Anti-Corn Law League put pressure upon him and he no doubt realized, for himself, the importance of being able to speak in the House of Commons on behalf of the great movement which now absorbed him. The old system of nominations at the hustings and show of hands gave rise to scenes sometimes amusing and sometimes dangerous. The "commodious hustings" were erected in front of the Bull's Head Inn, 29th June, 1841. The candidates were Henry Marsland, the Liberal member, Major Thomas Marsland the Conservative member, and Richard Cobden. The struggle was well known to be between "the Major" and Cobden. "If Richard Cobden was such a bird of Paradise why," asked one of the Tory speakers, "did not the people of Manchester call upon him to represent them?"¹

¹ It is quite possible that this gibe was based upon some gossip of the period. Why was Cobden, the main-spring of the Anti-Corn Law League, not selected to represent Manchester, the head-quarters of the movement? The younger men would have liked to see Cobden Member for Manchester. The matter went so far that a deputation from the

Cobden's speech was full of practical points, enlivened with touches of humour. He pointed out to the workmen that wheat could be bought at 38s. a quarter in the bonded warehouse at

Manchester Reform Association waited upon him to ask if he would stand. His reply was that he did not desire to enter Parliament since the Reformers had abandoned an independent position. To this fatal policy of making political principle subservient to the expediency of keeping the Whigs in and the Tories out he attributed at once the backsliding of the party in power from their former patriotic professions, the degeneracy of leading politicians in an age not otherwise marked by mental or moral inferiority; and more than all, that destruction of confidence in public men in the minds of the great mass of the people, which had caused disunion in the Liberal ranks, and threatened destruction to the reformers as a party." ("Tait's Magazine," 1840, p. 747.) The inner history of this episode has been told by Sir Edward Watkin. A new convert to Free Trade, Mr. Thomas Milner Gibson, who resigned a Tory seat at Ipswich, had made a favourable impression by his sincerity and graceful manners, and had especially captivated Sir Thomas Potter, who was the chairman of a meeting of the Liberal Party to select candidates. The claims of Cobden were urged by Mr. William Rawson, the treasurer of the League, but the influence of Sir Thomas was sufficient to insure the selection of Milner Gibson. He was not specially appropriate as the representative of an industrial and commercial centre, but he rendered great service in the Free Trade struggle. It is useless to speculate on the possibilities of Cobden as the parliamentary representative of Manchester, but it must take its place amongst the "might have beens" of history.

Liverpool and that the duty raised the price to 62s. 8d. "That," he said, "is forty-per cent. addition to the price. Every man in the kingdom earns, on the average, 10s. per week—more in the large towns, less in the country places." Here he was interrupted by a shout: "What do your own get at Cross Hall?" He at once rejoined: "My men get more than that. There is some fellow talking about Cross Hall; but would he not like to get there himself? I say every working man earns 10s. a week, one with another; and every family will eat 5s. a week worth of bread, one with another; so that forty per cent. on 5s. is 2s., and that is the tax he pays for bread alone. 2s. out of 10s. is twenty per cent., and twenty per cent. on his income is what he pays for the bread tax. The man who earns 20s. per week has no more to pay than the man who earns 10s., but instead of paying 20s. per cent. on his 20s. he pays 2s. for the bread tax, and that is five per cent. on his income; while the man who has £500 a year income pays no more than one per. cent.; and when you get to the rich man, with his £10,000 a year, he pays no more than 6d. per cent.; and when you get to the Duke of Buckingham, with his £300,000 a year, he pays no more than a halfpenny per

cent. for the bread tax. Is there any man who will justify that?"¹

The show of hands was in favour of Henry Marsland and Cobden, and this was justified at the poll, where the votes recorded were: Henry Marsland, 550; Richard Cobden, 530; Thomas Marsland, 334.

Cobden had very soon the melancholy duty of visiting his constituents to take part in a meeting to consider the intense sufferings of the people caused by the protective system.²

With the absorption of his time by the League and his advent to Parliament, Cobden was unable to continue his local services to Manchester. For years he may be said to have

¹ On the subject of the wages paid in the calico-printing trade much information is to be found in a MS. on the chemistry and history of that industry, written by Mr. John Graham and now preserved in the Manchester Free Library. The calico-printers at Sabden received from 25s. to 30s. weekly, and the dyers and washers 12s. weekly. In 1835 Cobden paid £23,000 in wages, and his employes spent £12,000 in meat, bread and vegetables, and had £11,000 to spare for tea, coffee, sugar, and other necessities and comforts of life. In 1840 he paid them the same sum, but they had then to pay £18,000 for bread, meat, and vegetables, leaving only £5,000 for other things." ("Manchester Guardian," 23rd June, 1841.)

² His speech is reported in the "Manchester Guardian," 3rd November, 1841.

lived in public debate, whether on the floor of the House of Commons or on the platform of the Free Trade Hall, or in the many places where he faced audiences, friendly and unfriendly, as the unflinching enemy of protection. The Citizen had now become the Statesman—the most powerful England has ever seen, who, from first to last, refused to take office. The Town Council of Manchester was naturally one of the first to congratulate Cobden on the Free Trade victory, as will be seen by the accompanying engraving.

Of course long after Cobden had ceased to be a citizen of Manchester he was a visitor, and some of his important political speeches were delivered here. It is pathetic now to read of the emotion with which he made his generous plea for John Bright, who was unable to appear personally before the electors of Manchester in the year 1857, when the party, of which Cobden was the leader, fared so disastrously at the polls.

No one foresaw so clearly as Cobden how terrible the War of the Secession would be, and how gravely it would affect Lancashire alike in the mansions of the cotton masters and in the cottages of the working people. His speech at the beginning of the Cotton Famine

COPY OF RESOLUTION PRESENTED TO COBDEN BY
THE MANCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL, JULY, 1846.
NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF THE FAMILY.

Borough of Manchester
Held a Meeting of the Council
of this Borough
Held on Wednesday the 8th of July 1846
at the Town Hall in Manchester

W^m. Benjamin Watkins Esq. Mayor in the Chair

(It was unanimously Resolved)

*That the best Thanks of this Council be rendered
to Richard Alden Esq. John Bright Esq. the
Honorable C. S. Villiers and other Members of
Parliament, whose talents and energy have been
successfully exerted in procuring a recognition of the
Trade principles in the Legislature, and to Colonel
Thompson and others out of Parliament who have taken
an active and zealous part in diffusing information amongst
the People on a question vitally affecting their interests
and happiness*

*Extracted from the Minutes of the Councils
Proceedings by*

Forster
Town Clerk

was prophetic. In 1859 Sir Edward Watkin met him after his return from America at the office of his brother-in-law, Mr. Sale, in Princess Street. The conversation turned on the bad blood between England and France. The acquittal of Dr. Bernard, charged with complicity in Orsini's desperate attempt to kill Napoleon III, and the irritating language of the French Colonels who presented an address to the Emperor, full of hatred of Britain, had caused much tension. Watkin suggested to Cobden that an interview with the Emperor and an appeal for peace through trade might be successful. Cobden, after some thought, replied, "I intend to go to Paris. I will certainly see some of those who have the ear and the confidence of the Emperor. I can try."¹ Thus Cobden's last as well as his first great service to the nation was associated with Manchester. The resolution adopted by the City Council on this occasion is shown in the engraving.

In considering Cobden's life during the

¹ Watkin, "Alderman Cobden," p. 178. Bright casually made a similar suggestion in a speech in the House of Commons, as did Count Persigny in a conversation with Lord John Russell. It was also pressed upon Cobden by M. Chevalier. (Morley's "Life of Cobden," chap. xxix.)

period in which he was a citizen of Manchester, the quantity and quality of the work that he did is equally surprising.

Cobden became a rate-payer of Manchester in 1832, and voted in its first parliamentary election. He not only managed the Manchester business of his firm but took an active interest in the Sadben works. In 1833 he made a visit to Paris, and in 1834 visited France and Switzerland. In the same year and in 1835 he was contributing letters on political topics to the "Manchester Times." In the spring of 1835 appeared his first pamphlet, "England, Ireland, and America." In May he left for his first American trip which, exclusive of the sea voyage, lasted thirty-seven days. He returned in August with projects for the establishment of an institution for the benefit, more especially of the younger members, of the commercial community. In this way he became the founder of the Manchester Athenaeum, and in its advocacy made, practically, his entrance into public life, although he is believed to have spoken at some obscure meeting in favour of the incorporation of the borough. In 1836 he was a Sidesman of the Cathedral, a member of the Literary Society, of the Literary and Philosophical Society, and of the Natural History

COPY OF RESOLUTION PRESENTED TO COBDEN BY
THE MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL, MARCH, 1861.
NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF THE FAMILY.

Society. At the end of August he published his pamphlet on "Russia." From October, 1836, to 27th April, 1837, he was away from England for reasons of health, and visited Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, in a six months' holiday. On his return home he contested Stockport, unsuccessfully, in July. He was present with Daniel O'Connell at an open-air demonstration there in November. He continued his exertions for the establishment of a system of elementary schools, and issued a pamphlet on "Education." He served on the Court Leet jury, and published "Incorporate your Borough!" The struggle for the Charter of Incorporation lasted through a good part of 1838. Then came the Municipal Elections, and the duties devolving on Cobden as an Alderman of Manchester. The same year witnessed the starting of the Anti-Corn Law League, which soon absorbed all Cobden's energies. Even during his wedding tour on the Continent in 1840, he wrote seven long letters, full of social and political data, for publication in the newspaper of the League. His election for Stockport in 1841 may practically be taken as the end of his work as a private citizen. His last home in Manchester was Westerfield, Park Crescent, Victoria Park,

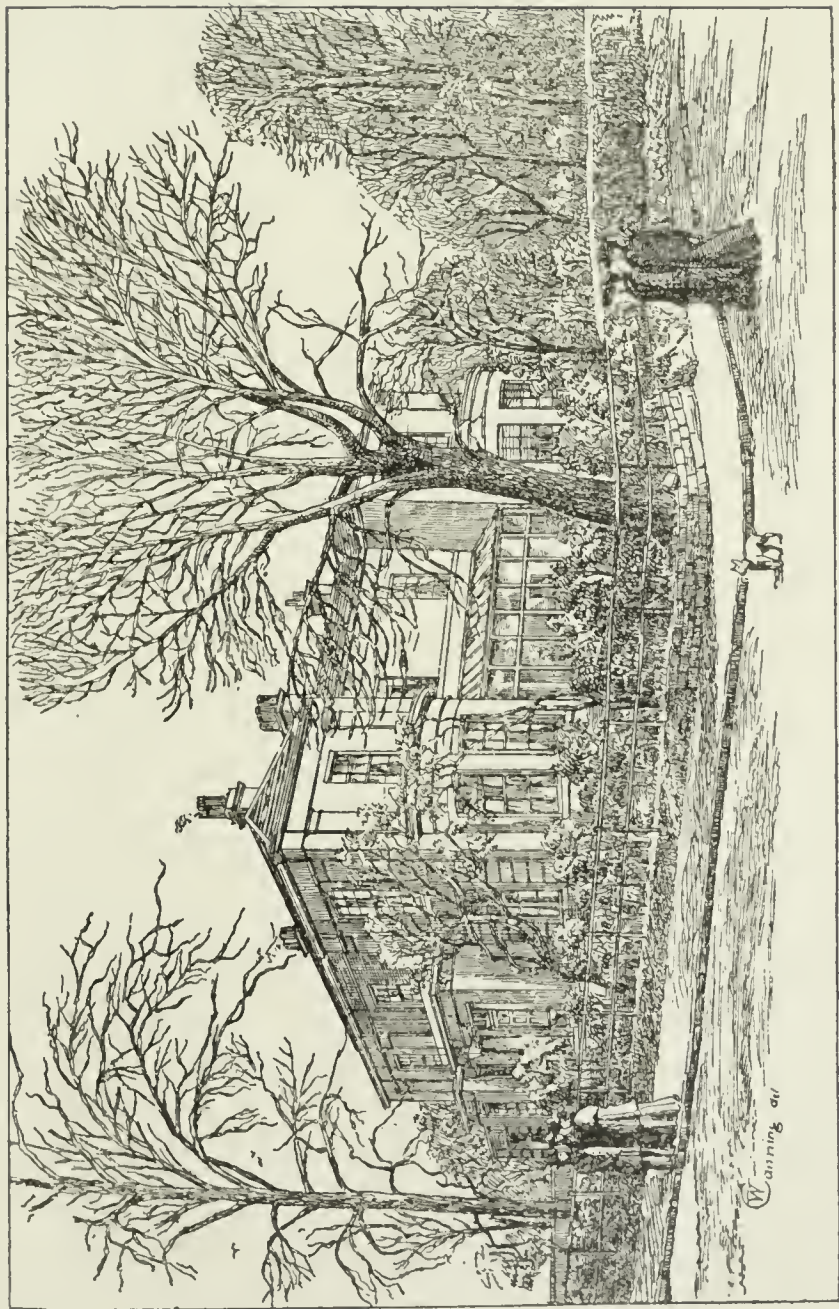
where he was resident in 1848. Mr. William Canning's drawing shows the house as it is to-day.

It is not uncommon for men, having served an apprenticeship to public life in the management of local affairs, to pass from them to the larger arena of parliament, but such instances do not afford an exact parallel to the experience of Cobden. Before taking an active part in the civic affairs of Manchester he had written his celebrated pamphlets dealing with problems of national and international welfare. It was from these high speculations that Cobden turned aside for a time in order to do "the duty nearest hand" in earnest effort for the benefit of those around him, and especially of those by whom the hard work of the world is done, and who do not always seem to secure an adequate return for their labour. Those who eat in the sweat of their face may be grateful to Richard Cobden, for he not only sought to strengthen them for their toil with daily bread, but to sweeten it with the fruits of knowledge, of freedom, and of brotherhood.

WESTERFIELD, PARK CRESCENT, VICTORIA PARK,
COBDEN'S LAST MANCHESTER RESIDENCE. FROM
A DRAWING BY WILLIAM CANNING.

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Westerfield, Cobden's last Manchester Residence.

INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH! A
FACSIMILE OF COBDEN'S
PAMPHLET.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH!

A LETTER

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF MANCHESTER,

BY A RADICAL REFORMER.

Fellow-Townsmen and Brother Reformers.

Lord John Russell declared in the House of Commons a few days ago that the *landed interest* has, and ought to have, an ascendancy over the town populations in the parliamentary representation of the country; but he forgot to explain his meaning by the term *landed interest*. Let us try to supply the omission. There are the labourers on the soil, who constitute forty-nine out of fifty of the rural population; what influence has this vast majority ever possessed in the counsels of the empire? Consult the fires of Swing, the history of the Dorchester labourers, and the report of the new poor law commissioners, for an answer! The tenants-at-will form, probably, one in a hundred of the inhabitants of the agricultural districts, and the fifty pound Chandos clause has given to their landlords, I had almost said their *owners*, such a recognised property in their mockery of a franchise, that we no longer shudder when we see them, at a general election, marching by hundreds, like gangs of white slaves, to the hustings, to vote at the command of their tory drivers. Does Lord John mean that the opinions of these helots have any ascendancy in the legislature. No; for his lordship's term, *landed*

interest, read the *landlord interest*—the interest of the aristocracy and squirearchy of the country, a body constituting not a fraction of one ten thousandth part of the entire community, as opposed to the just interest of the nation at large! The *landlord interest*, we are told, by its child and champion, the home-secretary, has a right to dominion over the towns,—this is a claim of very ancient standing. We read in history, that more than five hundred years since, the barbarous ancestors of these very same feudal landlords used to make excursions from their strong holds, to plunder, oppress, and ravage, with fire and sword, the peaceable and industrious inhabitants of the towns; until at length, the Kings of England, who were, in turn, exposed to the insolence of these marauders, from motives of policy, gave to the principal towns charters of corporation, or *co-operation*, which enabled their inhabitants to govern themselves, and protect their persons and property from such lordly depredators as chanced to inhabit the neighbouring baronial castles. The battle of our day is still against the aristocracy; and not the young and innocent occupant of the throne. The lords of Clumber, Belvoir, and Woburn, although they can no longer storm your town, and ransack your stores and shops, at the head of their mailed vassals, are as effectually plundering your manufacturers and their artisans; for, by the aid of their parchment votes and tenant-at-will serfs, they are still enabled to levy their infamous bread tax upon your industry. And must you tamely submit to this pillage, or, like your ancestors of old, will you not resist the aristocratic plunderers? If the latter, then imitate your forefathers by union and co-operation; amalgamate all ranks in your town, by securing to all classes a share in its government and protection; give unity, force, and efficiency to the intelligent and wealthy community of Manchester, and qualify it by organization, as it already is entitled by numbers, to be the leader in the battle against monopoly and privilege. In a word, INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH.

The new municipal corporation act, which was passed in 1835, when the spirit of reform ruled triumphantly in the House of Commons, was concocted by a body of commissioners, whose leaders were thorough Radicals; and although it received some damage, in the natural

course of things, in its passage through the Lords, yet sufficient was extorted from the fears of the upper House, so recently humbled by the passage of the Reform Act, to secure a charter of popular self-government applicable to all the great towns of the kingdom, and of a more democratic character than any other institution in Europe, excepting, perhaps, it be found in Switzerland.

By this act, every male person of full age, who has occupied for three years, and been rated for any house, shop, counting-house, warehouse, or room, (they may by either the *same* or *different* premises,) and has lived that time within seven miles of the borough, is a burgess of such borough, and a member of its body corporate, of mayor, aldermen, and burgesses. The government of the boroughs is vested in the council, to be composed of mayor, aldermen, and councillors. The number of aldermen is in the proportion of one-third of the councillors, who are more or less numerous according to the size of the borough; in Leeds and Liverpool they have each forty-eight councillors, and sixteen aldermen, which would probably be the complement for Manchester. The councillors are elected by the burgesses for a term of three years, one-third going out every year, but being re-eligible. The aldermen are elected by the councillors, either from their own body or from the burgesses, for a term of six years, one half going out at the end of every third year, but being also eligible for re-election. The mayor is elected every year by the council, from the aldermen and councillors; he is a magistrate by virtue of his office, and also for a year after he ceases to be mayor; and he has precedence in all places within the borough. The larger boroughs, where quarter sessions are held, are exempt from the payment of county rates. In the original bill, as passed by the Commons, power was given to the town councils to nominate borough magistrates, subject to the approval of the government, which clause was altered by the peers, leaving the absolute appointment in the hands of the crown. But the Whig ministry has acted up to the original intention of the bill, by calling on the councils to nominate magistrates, and in almost every case confirming their choice; so that the power of electing their own magistrates virtually rests with the corporations. There are, of course, a multitude of other clauses in the

act; amongst which are regulations for the appointment of a town clerk and a recorder, and for forming a watch committee; fines fixed for refusing to serve when elected; power given to the council to make by-laws, and to fine to the extent of five pounds; and there is a clause exempting the burgesses from serving as jurors at courts of quarter sessions for the county.

The fundamental principles of the new municipal corporation act are—the *household qualification*, and an *equality of suffrage*; upon these broad and secure foundations the entire superstructure rests. Every man's vote, however humble his circumstances may be, is of equal value with his wealthiest neighbour's. There is no clause borrowed from Sturges Bourne's Act, giving six votes to the rich mill-owner, and only one to the small shopkeeper. The banker or the merchant, though worth a million, and though he ride in his carriage to the polling booth, can only record the same number of votes as the poor artisan, who walks there perhaps slipshod and aproned from his garret or cellar.

Upwards of 180 large towns, situated in every part of the empire, are governed according to the provisions of the new municipal reform act, and with universal satisfaction to the people. They are, in fact, so many little democracies, calculated to afford useful lessons of equality; to destroy the barriers behind which the proud and wealthy are too prone to thrust the poor and dependent; to teach the haughty few to respect the abject many; and, which is of greater value still, they tend to impart to the multitude the elevating feelings of self-respect.

By a provision of the municipal corporation reform act, the Privy Council has the power to incorporate any town whose inhabitants petition for the privilege. Birmingham lately held a great public meeting, in its noble town hall, for that purpose, at which its popular members, Messrs. Attwood and Scholefield, and all the Radical leaders attended, when resolutions were unanimously and enthusiastically passed, in favour of an immediate application to the Privy Council for an incorporation of that borough. Fellow-townsmen! follow the example of the men of Birmingham, who are always foremost in the path of reform,—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH. The mode of securing the advantages of

democratic self-government for your town is easy and simple. Let a public meeting be called, and resolutions be passed in favour of the object desired; then appoint a committee, to prepare a petition to Her Majesty in council. A month's notice must be given in the *Gazette*, before the application can be taken into consideration; afterwards, and in due course of official proceedings, the attainment of the act of incorporation is certain; and next November, at the annual election of corporate officers throughout the British empire, Manchester will be entitled to enjoy, along with Leeds, Glasgow, Liverpool, and the rest of the great boroughs, the blessings of free, self-government. Imitate, then, the example of Birmingham in the promptitude of your proceedings. Is there no danger that circumstances may arise to impede you in your application to the Queen's Council? *Are there no symptoms ominous of tory ascendancy?* Should the country again fall a prey to that political party, how much the more would your town stand in need of the protection of a *liberal local government!*

Recollect that the massacre of the 16th of Aug., 1819, could not have occurred, if Manchester had then been incorporated according to the provisions of the present municipal reform act;—and why? Because the united magistrates of Lancashire and Cheshire, who then entered the town, to hold their bench at the Star Inn, take the command of the police, and order the soldiers to cut down and trample upon unarmed crowds, would, in such a case, have no more jurisdiction over Manchester than Constantinople. No!—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH! and thenceforth, neither Mr. Hulton, of Hulton, nor any Tory squire or parson, will ever come into your town at the head of a dozen magisterial bumpkins, first to let loose a troop of fox hunters, disguised as yeomanry cavalry, to try the metal of their swords upon helpless women and children, and afterwards to return public thanks to the officers and men for their extreme forbearance on the occasion!* No; for by one of the provi-

* The conduct of the common council of the city of London, at this melancholy and memorable period, proves the advantages derived from a municipal corporation, particularly in times of excitement and danger; and contrasts mournfully with the prostrate and helpless fate of the town of Manchester, for want of such an organization. No sooner was it known that the Prince Regent

sions of the corporation reform act, no person can be appointed to the office of justice of the peace in any of the boroughs holding quarter sessions, unless he live within the limits prescribed for the residences of the burgesses. In this clause alone, I find a sufficient reason, if there were not an hundred others, for applying for an act of incorporation, and thus to place for ever the population of our town and neighbourhood beyond the control of a booby squirearchy, who abhor us not more for our love of political freedom, than for those active and intellectual pursuits which contrast so strongly with that mental stupor in which they exist—I had almost said—vegetate.

I have endeavoured to give you a faint outline of the new municipal reform act, under the provisions of which it is in your power to place your borough; but let me now glance for a moment, for the sake of contrast, at the kind of government which this place at present suffers under. The chief municipal officer is the borough-reeve, appointed at the court-leet of the lord of the Manor; the two constables being chosen at the same time and manner, for the heads of the police; and the three are universally recognised as the highest authorities of the town; and responsible for the peace, lives, and properties, of this populous, wealthy, and somewhat excitable community. Now, how will my readers, who are not in the secret, be surprised when they are told of the manner in which these important functionaries are appointed to the government of the second town in the British empire! It cannot be better explained than by describing the proceedings at the last court-leet of the Lord of the Manor, when it was my amusing fate to be summoned as one of the jurors.

And first, for the locality, where the august ceremony of the election of the highest municipal officers for the town of Manchester takes place.

had been advised to express his approbation of those proceedings, than the common council of London passed resolutions, condemning the conduct of the magistrates and yeomanry as being "disgraceful to the character of Englishmen;" and they addressed the Prince Regent, remonstrating with his royal highness for having been induced to express his approval of the conduct of the abettors and perpetrators of those atrocities, and praying him to cause the guilty perpetrators thereof to be brought to signal and condign punishment.

At the appointed hour, ascending by a flight of steps in Brown-Street, leading up to several other apartments, and to a dancing master's academy amongst the rest, I reached the door of the manor court-room, which is large, and altogether destitute of furniture, whose row of tall, old-fashioned windows, would, but for the crust of smoke and dirt that covered them, have afforded a cheerful light. The atmosphere of the room was heavy and stale; it had probably been confined ever since the last public meeting of the tee-totalers was held there, a month before. To the left of the door lay a heap of sawdust, provided, perhaps, (but this is only conjecture,) against a meeting of operative Conservatives, when it would be judiciously strewed on the floor, to hide the dirt which those worthies are accustomed to carry about them. A filthy white dog, with black spots, had curled himself upon this tempting bed; and he lifted up his ears with excusable surprise at the shrill tones of the cryer, who now opened the court with the usual "O yes," followed by an unintelligible jargon of Saxon, old English, and Norman epithets. The jurors were now penned within a small enclosure at the furthest extremity of the room; the representative of the Lord of the Manor took his seat in a small desk springing from the wall; his legal agent sat below; the oaths were administered to the jurymen; and the assessor, having in about three minutes and a half delivered his charge, adjourned the court till the afternoon. Whilst these preliminaries were going on, I looked over the enclosure which, I supposed, was designed to separate the crowd of spectators from the jurors, and I counted, besides the police constables, exactly *seven individuals*, and they, one by one, walked listlessly away, leaving the jurors only in the deserted and murky chamber; and we now proceeded to make choice of three persons to fill the offices of boroughreeve and constables of Manchester,—a task in which we were greatly quickened by the piercing cold vapour with which the apartment was filled. Having dispatched messengers to the individuals nominated, summoning them to appear in the afternoon, to be sworn into office, we separated. At the appointed hour, the court and jurors again assembled, when the gentleman who had been nominated to the office of boroughreeve attended, and claimed to be exempted on the ground of

ill health, and previous services. The jurors protested that there was not another person remaining in the township liable, and at the same time eligible, to fill this high office. Some little difference of opinion existing, however, we requested permission to retire, and were conducted through a door opening off the landing outside the room, into a closet under the stairs, in which were deposited the bonnets, shawls, cloaks, and clogs of the nymphs who were threading the mazes of the quadrille and waltz, in the dancing academy above. Here some stood, whilst others sat, and the remainder stooped beneath the stairs, till our deliberations, which were not a little accelerated by our incommodious quarters, were brought to a close, and we retired into court with a verdict against the claims to exemption put in by the boroughreeve elect, who thereupon was declared contumacious, and fined £200, (which fine was afterwards remitted.) Our choice next fell upon an individual absent from Manchester, and the court was adjourned for two days, that he might have time to appear. On reassembling at the appointed time, he presented himself to protest against the nomination; but he yielded reluctantly, and the honour was at last gently forced upon him. The two individuals chosen constables were also unwillingly compelled to take the oaths of office. The cryer soon afterwards formally adjourned the court to the *Mosley Arms Hotel, for dinner*, at which all present laughed heartily; and thus, very appropriately, terminated the *farce of a mock election of officers to govern the affairs of the town of Manchester*.

Neither the boroughreeve nor the constables whom I joined in electing, were known to me, privately or publicly. I had not the least knowledge of them, personally or by repute; and other jurors were alike in the dark upon the subject of their qualifications. The jury summoned to appoint those officers are selected by the legal agent of the Lord of the Manor; they attend unwillingly; the constables serve their offices unwillingly; the boroughreeve submits to his appointment unwillingly; the public is indifferent to the whole proceeding, not one in ten thousand of the population of Manchester attending to witness it; probably not one person in fifty of the inhabitants of the borough knows even the names of the boroughreeve and con-

stables at this moment; and not one individual in two hundred is acquainted with them personally. Yet, to them is intrusted the guardianship of the peace of the town; and, in case of emergency, on them should we be compelled to depend for conduct to command the confidence of a population of 100,000 persons, of whom not five in 100 ever heard of their names! * How much ought we to thank that inherent love of order and reverence for authority in the people, which, notwithstanding our absurd adhesion to old and obsolete forms of government, secure to us, in spite of ourselves, the blessings of tranquillity!

The difficulty in appointing individuals residing within the township, who alone are liable to serve the offices of boroughreeve and constables, arises from the circumstance of almost all the merchants, manufacturers, and wholesale dealers having removed their residences into the out-townships, where they are beyond the jurisdiction of the Lord of the Manor's court-leet. There is another circumstance, however, which, whilst it explains partly the difficulty, will also throw a light upon the aristocratic spirit which clings more or less to everything having a feudal origin. It is, of course, very well known that hundreds of respectable and wealthy *shopkeepers* reside within the township of Manchester; but it is not equally notorious that it has always been a maxim, at the election of municipal officers, that no retailer was eligible to fill the office of boroughreeve or constable! And so anxious have the Tory manufacturers and wholesale dealers been to apportion amongst their own order, dignities, however humble, that even the menial offices in the gift of Sir Oswald Mosley's feudal court have been distributed in the same aristocratic spirit. A late parliamentary candidate for the borough of Salford held the high office of ale taster; and the Manchester Directory for 1833 records that our richest banker, an individual whose princely fortune would entitle him to a dukedom in any other country in Europe, held the responsible post of *muzzler of mastiff dogs and bitches!* The tone

* I beg to be understood as referring only to the system, and not meaning anything personal or invidious in alluding to these gentlemen, who are, I believe, as reputable and as well qualified as any of their predecessors, to fill the offices to which they are appointed.

which has so long prevailed in the government of the town has naturally enough pervaded all our public institutions, and even entered into the private arrangements of social life. It is well understood, for example, that if the shopkeeper's family be not formally interdicted from entering our public assemblies, they would not be consulting their own interest or enjoyment by attending them; and the retailer would find it, probably, almost as difficult to gain admission to our clubs and our concert, as he might to obtain the privilege of *entré* to the Queen's court. The *wholesale* dealer in fustians or fents, whose *bundles* occupy a garret or cellar, from which they only issue in the gross, may, however vulgar in mind or ill-bred in manners, gain admission without difficulty to places of privileged resort, from which the retail mercer or jeweller, with perhaps ten times the wealth, and whose vocation demands some refinement of manners and cultivation of mind, would feel himself excluded. What wonder, with these facts in view, if we sometimes meet with Tory-radicals or operative Conservatives! What wonder if the sincere democrat, finding a counterfeit aristocracy everywhere current, should grow bewildered at the sight of the spurious imitations, and, to escape deception, prefer such as bear the genuine stamp of nobility!

How different from the state of things just described, is the condition of social life in the city of London, where all distinction of rank between the wholesale and retail dealer is unknown,—where warehousemen and shopkeepers, if upon a par in wealth, character, and education, meet at assemblies and clubs, or interchange domestic visits in a spirit of perfect equality. But in the city of London, where you will find no manor court-leet diffusing its tone of feudal insolence and slavish servility, there is a corporation renowned for its liberal character; and more than a moiety of its common councilmen, and several of the aldermen, are shopkeepers. The celebrated Alderman Waithman, who served the high offices of Sheriff of Middlesex and Lord Mayor of London, and was long a member for the city, was a linen draper, and the business of his shop is still carried on at the corner of Fleet-Street, by his sons. At the shop formerly occupied by Alderman Birch, the pastry cook, in Cornhill, you may still refresh yourselves with buns

or halfpenny biscuits; and the present Lord Mayor of London, now Sir John Cowan, Bart., who received a visit from the Sovereign herself, and whose lady entertained Her Majesty and the princesses with such admirable dignity, is a dealer in candles;—his shop is in the Poultry, directly opposite to the mansion house, which induced some waggish Cockney, on the day of his installation as Lord Mayor, to write upon his window,—“*Removed over the way.*”

But another of the difficulties in the way of finding proper persons to fill the offices of boroughreeve and constables remains to be noticed. There has been a tacit, if not an avowed, exclusion of Dissenters from these appointments. No person has yet been allowed to fill the post of boroughreeve, who would not attend at the Collegiate Church every Sunday, and thus afford his official sanction to the high Church and high Tory doctrines which are said to be promulgated from its pulpit. One of the merits of the new corporation charter, and not its least, is that it recognises no distribution of sects; and if, to use the language of one of the speakers* at the late meeting to petition for the incorporation of Birmingham, “the Dissenters should avail themselves of this and every other fragment of power to counterpoise the influence brought into play against them,” then I need not doubt of the active cooperation of that most influential body in Manchester, when I say to them more especially—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH.

Having thus taken a hasty glance at the present mode of governing this town, and also endeavoured to give a slight sketch of the leading characteristics of the municipal corporation reform act, sufficient facts are before the reader to enable him to come to a decision upon the respective merits of the two systems. It remains for the inhabitants of Manchester to determine, whether the control over the police of the town shall remain in the hands of individuals, nominated by the irresponsible jury of an antiquated court-leet, convened by private summons, and sitting in an obscure and dingy apartment, or huddled together in a stairs closet; or whether the municipal officers shall be chosen from amongst the best and most popular men in the borough, in open day, and in public assembly, after a full discussion of the merits of the

* Mr. Wills.

respective candidates, by the people, who will afterwards support them in their authority, and to whom, in return, they shall be responsible. Such is the choice submitted to the people of Manchester. Is there a party, or is there a man amongst us who will hesitate to raise his voice in favour of democratic self-government? If there be such a man, mark him, for whatever his professions may be, depend upon it, he is not at heart a reformer or a friend of the people. The new corporations are trades' unions, in opposition to the corn-law tyrants,—the "*landed interest*;" they are normal schools of agitation, for the education of orators and patriots; "they are," (to use the words of Thomas Attwood, Esq., M.P. uttered at the late meeting at Birmingham, before referred to,) "real and legal political unions in every borough, and they accomplish things much better than the Political Union, which is very difficult to move, and attended with great hazard and expense into the bargain." Such being the nature and tendency of the new corporations, you may be assured, if the proposal to apply for one for Manchester be resisted, the opposition will not come from the sincere reformers. The shopkeepers, to a man, will support the plan, because its immediate operation will tend, as has already been shown by the example of London, to elevate them to their proper level in the social scale, and afford to the public-spirited individuals of that most influential class an enlarged field of usefulness. The dissenters of almost every sect will, on this, as on all other occasions, be found on the side of wholesome reform. Who, then, will oppose the incorporating of the borough? They, alone, who resisted so strenuously the passing of the municipal reform act; they who thwarted the commissioners in their inquiries into the corruptions of those dens of iniquity, the old corporations, in 1834, and afterwards defended the rotten boroughs, by counsel, at the bar of the House of Lords, in 1835; they who petitioned the peers to deprive the bill of some of its best provisions, and procured the insertion of the odious qualification clause for councillors; they who now refuse corporations to Ireland; they who entailed upon Liverpool, Norwich, and the rest of the boroughs, the curse of their venal freemen; they, THE TORIES, will, by every art, manœuvre, and device, oppose the

attempt to incorporate your borough. They know that at an election of councillors and aldermen, not three out of the sixty four of our members of the town council will be Tories; they know this, and therefore they will wisely and consistently oppose the incorporation of the borough.

But they will take care not to come forward in their own character; they will resist your efforts under the guise of respect to the people; they will fight you under the false colours of economy; they will pretend to be the *tribunes of the poor*; and probably cover the walls of the town with handbills, calling upon us to beware of a Bourbon police, poor-law unions, and bastilles; or they will repeat the story placarded throughout Birmingham, the day before the great meeting there, "that the government will not grant a corporation unless we agree to spend £17,000 a year!" All these and a thousand other tricks will be resorted to by the Tories, to cover their real designs of keeping down the people, and retaining all the power in their own hands. But they will fail here as signally as they did in the town hall of Birmingham; for, when the time for holding the public meeting arrives, not a single Tory will attend our town hall, as was the case in the above instance, to witness the enthusiastic and unanimous vote in favour of a petition to the Privy Council, to incorporate the borough.

But the Tories have a plan of their own for electing municipal officers, as a substitute for the barbarous and even tory-condemned court-leet; they have proposed, by their organ of the press, that the boroughreeve and constables shall be elected from the same body as the commissioners of police; they would, in fact, retain for Manchester the £16 qualification, whilst all the corporate boroughs in the kingdom elect their town councils by household suffrage! Such is the magnanimous proposal of the Tories to the housekeepers of Manchester; and should their patrons, Wellington and Peel, possess themselves of office, such is the sort of local government which we might expect them to inflict upon us. Reformers of Manchester! if you would secure yourselves against such a calamity, be prompt in your imitation of the example set you by the Radicals of Birmingham; they are nearer to St. James's and Downing-Street by little less than one hundred miles than you, and have better channels through which to learn the intrigues of

courtiers, and the machinations of parties; a whisper, a *billet-doux*, might in an instant change a ministry, and metamorphose the state-policy of this great empire. Secure for your town, then, the advantages of a free and democratic government!

The *cost* of a good municipal administration must depend altogether upon the discretion of the burgesses, in electing prudent and economical councillors to manage their affairs. The housekeepers of Leeds, Liverpool, and the neighbouring borough of Stockport, are found capable of choosing honest councillors and aldermen; and I contend, notwithstanding the opinion of the Tories to the contrary, that the people of Manchester are also to be trusted with the selection of their public officers. It will be the fault of the housekeepers themselves, if they allow their own servants to be extravagant in the expenditure of their money. As to the *ability* of Manchester to support a municipal government, whilst such places as Bath, Ipswich, St. Albans, and Scarborough, possess corporations, I should be ashamed to offer an argument upon the subject. If the Tories be sincere in their alarm about the burdens which a corporation will impose upon the town,—if they really believe, although one hundred and eighty boroughs in the British empire are at this moment incorporated, some of which are, in extent, mere villages, that Manchester cannot or will not pay a similar price for the privilege of a good and free government,—then let them subscribe from their wealth, and send a begging box abroad, that funds may be raised to rescue their native borough from such a disgraceful distinction.

It is said that the inhabitants of Chorlton-upon-Medlock would object to have their township incorporated with that of Manchester. The reason stated is, I believe, that the rates in the former district are lighter than those in the latter; and that to amalgamate the whole would impose an increased burden upon the out-township. I do not know how far this is the fact, but I will assume it for sake of argument. It appears to me, however, that it is a very confined view of the whole matter. The population of Chorlton are so entirely connected with, and indeed dependent upon, Manchester, by business ties, that it is impossible the two can have separate interests. Let a person take his stand at the

bottom of Lower Brook Street, or in Oxford Street, from eight to ten o'clock in the morning, and behold the multitudes of people who are passing during all that time to their places of business in Manchester: then let that person take his station at either of the same spots from five to seven o'clock in the evening; and witness the tide of population flowing back again;—and he will instantly be convinced, not only that the inhabitants of Manchester and Chorlton cannot have rival interests, but that they are, in fact, identically the same persons:—they are the inhabitants of Manchester by day and of Chorlton-upon-Medlock by night. Probably, in nine out of every ten of the houses in the principal streets of Chorlton, one or more male persons will be found who are engaged in business throughout the day in Manchester. It must be obvious, then, that as the owners and occupiers of property in the two townships are essentially the same; and as the equalization of the two rates could only increase the one by diminishing the other, no loss could be suffered by such parties, any more than the taking of money from one pocket to put it into the other, would constitute a robbery. The same arguments apply, *prospectively* at least, to the clerks and other junior members of the trading community residing in Chorlton, who, although they are not at present occupying warehouses or offices, in Manchester, are enjoying the prospect of doing so, and who are too enlightened to oppose an amelioration in local government, in which they are probably beyond all others ultimately interested.

There is one important fact, in connexion with this subject. It is enacted in the Municipal Corporation Act, that every person occupying a warehouse, shop, house, or counting-house, in any borough, and living within seven miles of such borough, shall be a burgess thereof, and be liable to be elected to the office of Mayor, Councillor, Assessor, and all other offices in the Corporation: and should he refuse to serve he will be subject to a fine of one hundred pounds. It follows, therefore, that all the inhabitants of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, who possess establishments in Manchester, will be members of the corporation, *even should the two townships not be united*, and so far from saving either money, or, which is more precious, *time*, by this separation of governments, they must submit to a sacrifice of one or the other, in consequence of their double allegiance;—they must either consent to fill the public offices in both townships, or else pay the fines in one of them.*

* Much of this, and of that which follows, upon the subject of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, applies equally to Salford. Looking back over the list of boroughreeves and constables for that borough, I perceive that almost every individual who has served those offices during the last ten years, has possessed an establishment in Manchester, and would have been, under a corporation, liable to fill all its public offices. I offer this as a fact, without grounding any argument upon it.

I am not going to pass over the numerous class of small shopkeepers and others in Chorlton-upon-Medlock, whose interests are wholly confined to the district in which they reside. It might be said, that they are not concerned in the question of incorporating Manchester; but it might be easily proved, that if the township of Manchester should be placed under the admirable provisions of the Municipal Corporation Reform Act, whilst Chorlton-upon-Medlock continued to increase in population without the advantages of such a charter, its government must necessarily, in time, become unsuited to so great a community; and, supposing such an inconvenient state of things to be perpetuated, until it were found that the police of the township were insufficiently regulated, it would prove a serious evil to its industrious inhabitants, by deterring people of property from taking up their residence in it. It is said, however, that Chorlton is growing so rapidly in numbers, that it will by and by contain nearly 100,000 inhabitants, and be entitled to a corporation of its own. But that township can only increase in population in consequence of the growth of Manchester, of which it must necessarily be still a suburb. It cannot possess the individual qualities of a distinct town. No one pretends that Chorlton-upon-Medlock will have an Exchange of its own, or banks, or a post office, a theatre, a newspaper, or literary and scientific institutions, or news-rooms, or any of the usual concomitants of a great and independent community. But were the facts before stated urged in opposition, they must prove fatal to such a claim. If it were shown before the Privy Council, from statistical data, as might easily be done, that a great proportion of the inhabitants of Chorlton were already burgesses of the corporation of Manchester, a distinct charter would, under such circumstances, certainly not be granted. It has, to be sure, been good-humouredly imputed to Chorlton-upon-Medlock, that it has hopes of being a parliamentary borough! I hope, however, its active and public spirited reformers will not detach themselves from their political brethren in Manchester, until they have a more certain prospect than at present of possessing that privilege; we cannot afford to lose such valuable allies. It is to a number of intelligent and influential inhabitants of Chorlton, more than probably to all the voters besides, *(and the fact speaks volumes to prove the identity of interests pervading the two townships)* that one, if not both of our borough members, are indebted for their returns.

But I have trespassed so long on your attention, that I shall only add one other argument in favour of the object I am advocating: but it is an argument that will appeal not less to the reason than the sympathies of all who can feel for the sufferings of their oppressed and tortured fellow-countrymen in the sister island. It is very well known that the Irish are contending for corporation reform: they are struggling to get rid of those legalised Orange Lodges, misnamed corporations, which harass them in every borough; they desire to elect their own municipal officers from amongst their patriotic and honourable fellow-citizens, instead of having thrust upon them, (to use O'Connell's words at the late Stockport festival,) "some pitiful politician, making the day disagreeable by his party politics, and the night disgusting by the worst party toasts, who, after oppressing the people by day, insults them by night." But he is thwarted in the legislature, in his attempt to reform these rotten boroughs, by the Tories:—and what is the favourite argument the latter use? why, that Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield, have no corporations, and yet they are very prosperous and content! One of the purest of her patriots described to me, a few weeks ago, in terms of glowing eloquence, how bitterly the people of Ireland feel and regret these appeals to the example of the greatest of our manufacturing towns. Irishmen inhabitants of Manchester! let us no longer continue to supply practical argument for tyrants: lend your aid to wipe out this blot upon the character of the town; and thus assist your great liberator in his battle for justice for Ireland! Once more, for all the reasons I have named, and for a thousand others I could if time permitted, mention, I repeat to the Reformers of Manchester,—INCORPORATE YOUR BOROUGH!

A RADICAL REFORMER.

J. GADSBY, PRINTER, NEWALL'S-BUILDINGS.

APPENDIX. COBDEN BIBLIOGRAPHY.

THE basis of this list of the writings of Richard Cobden and the literature to which they have given rise is the Catalogue of the British Museum; but there are many titles included here which are not in the National Library. The British Museum list was reprinted by Mr. T. Fisher Unwin as an appendix to the edition of Cobden's "Political Writings" published by him. As a matter of convenience the pressmarks at the British Museum have been added to the entries. The letters M.F.L. indicate that the work is not in the British Museum, but may be consulted in the Manchester Reference Library. Articles in biographical dictionaries and encyclopaedias have not been included, but reference should be made to Leslie Stephen's "Dictionary of National Biography" (John Morley); R. H. Inglis Palgrave's "Dictionary of Political Economy" (London, 1894-9, 3 vols.); and Conrad, Elster, Lewis, and Loening's "Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften" (Jena, 1891-7, 7 vols.). Many magazine articles have appeared relating to Cobden, but a clue to these will be found in Poole's "Index to Periodical Literature" and its continuation, and in Stead's "Index to Periodicals." The article on Cobden in the "British Quarterly

Review," No. lxxxv, January, 1866, was written by Mr. Torrens MacCullagh, M.P. The foreign Cobden literature may be traced by the elaborate general indexes to the "Journal des Economistes." The best collection of Cobdeniana known to me is that in the Manchester Free Library.

It would be difficult, and probably impossible, to catalogue or collect Cobden's contributions to periodical literature. Mr. Archibald Prentice, the editor of the "Manchester Times," mentions letters that he wrote in that paper. He contributed, amongst other things, eight letters written during his honeymoon tour to the "Anti-Corn Law Circular" (Nos. 36-45) of 1840. He also wrote for "Tait's Magazine": one of his articles (1838, p. 695) is an interview with Mehemet Ali, and is in substance identical with the account printed by Morley from Cobden's "Journal." One on Caviglia's "Discoveries in Egypt" (1837, p. 706) has his initials, and one "On the Eastern Question" (1841, p. 78), is signed. He almost certainly contributed to the "League," the "Manchester Examiner," and the "Morning Star." The "North of England Magazine" began in February, 1842, and ended September, 1843, when it was incorporated in "Brad-

shaw's Manchester Journal." The editor in the preface to each of the three volumes includes Cobden in his list of contributors, but his articles are not signed. The failure of this magazine was commemorated by the establishment of a club composed of its founders, who, under the name and style of "The Victims," celebrated their own losses. An account of the club appears in the "Papers of the Manchester Literary Club," vol. ii, p. 28.

On Cobden's ancestry see "Notes and Queries" 7th Series, xi, 426, 510. There are, of course, many references to him in the political literature of his time, and in the biographies of Bright, Gladstone, and other statesmen.¹ His portrait is understood to

¹ It may be well to give the titles of some of the more important books.

Speeches on Questions of Public Policy. By John Bright, M.P. Edited by James E. Thorold Rogers. London, 1868. 8vo. 2 vols. Pp. xv, 535, and 567.

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Stowe, Mrs. Harriet Beecher. *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands.* London, 1854. 8vo.

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should include references to the "Speeches on Questions of Public Policy," edited by John Bright and J. E. Thorold Rogers, and to the collected edition of the "Political Writings." This has been done, and the result is a chronological list of the writings of Cobden, and of all his speeches that have been reprinted from "Hansard," or from newspaper reports. Since this list appeared in "Notes and Queries," additional titles have been supplied by Mr. Fisher Unwin from Midhurst.—W. E. A. A.

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1837.

National Education. A Reply of the Rev.

Hugh Stowell's Letter. By R. Cobden, Esq.
Manchester, 1837. 8vo. Pp. 8.

1838.

Incorporate your Borough! A letter to the
Inhabitants of Manchester. By a Radical
Reformer. Manchester, J. Gadsby [1838].
8vo. Pp. 16.—This tract, of which 5,000
copies were printed, led to the obtaining of
a municipal charter for the Parliamentary
borough of Manchester. It became exces-
sively rare, and the only copy now known
to be in existence is in the possession of Mrs.
Jane Cobden Unwin. Several Manchester
collectors are known to have been looking
for this tract, unsuccessfully, for many years
past. Two may be mentioned, father and
son, who have vainly searched for a copy
since 1852. Mrs. Cobden Unwin's copy had
a place of honour in the Old Manchester Ex-
hibition of 1904.

1839.

Report of the Directors to a Special Meeting
of the Chamber of Commerce and Manu-
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Scott (A. T.). In Memoriam. The Life and Labours of Richard Cobden . . . to which is appended an Account of the Funeral. London, 1865. 8vo. 10825. bb. 33. (6.)

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Watkin (Sir Edward William, Bart.). Alderman Cobden of Manchester. Letters and reminiscences of Richard Cobden, with portraits, illustrations, etc. London, Ward and Lock [1891]. 4to. Pp. 218. 10816. g. 10.

Welby (Sir Reginald Earle, Baron) and Mallet (Sir Louis). Cobden's Work and Opinions. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1904. 8vo. Pp. 48.—This is the Preface to the "Political

Writings," 1903, with the omission of a few phrases.

Withers (J. R.). Elegy on the late Richard Cobden, M.P. Manchester, 1865. 8vo. Pp. 8. M.F.L.

Woods (J. Crawford). In Memory of Richard Cobden, a sermon [on Isaiah x, 18, and Matt. xxv, 34, 35, 40] preached . . . 9th July, 1865. Adelaide, 1865. 8vo. 10816. bbb. 15. (3.)

IV. COMMENT AND CRITICISM. / (Arranged chronologically.)

1836.

Analysis of Mr. Cobden's "Cure for the Russophobia." [London, J. Ridgway and Sons, 1836.] 8vo. 8028. e. 36. (1.)

1837.

Russia. In answer to a Manchester Manufacturer. London, 1837. 8vo. 8026. g. 33. (1.)

1843.

Isaac Maydwell's Analysis of Cobden's Addresses, with remarks on Mr. [R. H.] Greg's speech at the Great League Meeting at Manchester. London, 1843. 8vo. 1391. g. 47.

1844.

On Patriotism. A Letter to Richard Cobden, Esquire, M.P., and John Bright, Esquire,

M.P., or, a friendly remonstrance with them, on what may be truly called their incessant persecution of the prime minister; another to the Marquis of Westminster, Earl Fitzwilliam, etc. By Civis. Manchester, Joseph Pratt, Printer, 23, Bridge Street, 1844. 8vo. Pp. 50.—The letter concludes as follows: "Your most obdt. hble. servt., John Bridge, Crescent, Salford, April, 1844."

—A Letter from a Crow to Mr. Cobden. Translated from the original by a Northamptonshire Squire. London, 1844. 4to. 1391. g. 31.

1845.

Is Cobden a traitor for speaking and voting for the Education of Priests? And ought the League to be broken up? By a Lancashire Banker. Second edition, London, Cleave. [Manchester, printed by James Kiernan. 8vo. Pp. 16. 1845.]

Bastiat (Frédéric). Cobden et la Ligue, ou l'agitation anglaise pour la liberté du commerce, etc. Paris [Senlis printed], 1845. 8vo. Pp. xcvi-426. 1391. g. 14.

1846.

Maitre (C.). Richard Cobden, ou l'Esprit Anglais contre l'Esprit Français à propos

de la Liberté des Echanges. Paris, 1846.
16mo. 1391. a. 35. (2.)

Garnier (C. J.). Richard Cobden, les Ligueurs,
et la Ligue: précis de l'histoire de la dernière
révolution économique et financière en
Angleterre. Paris, 1846. 12mo. 1391. a. 32.

Lines in celebration of the Grand Free Trade
Festival, 3rd August, 1846. By Robert
Dibb, the Wharfedale Poet. [Manchester.]
Printed during the progress of the Grand
Free Trade Procession by Metcalfe and
Lavender . . . Manchester.—A pictorial
broadside, containing a view of the birth-
place of Cobden.

1847.

Discorso Economico sulla Maremma Sanese
dell' Arcidiacono Sallustio Antonio Bandini.
Nuova Edizione. Dedicata al Celebre Ric-
cardo Cobden. Riveduta sul MS. Autografo.
Siena, Tipographia dell' Ancora, 1847.

— Letter to Richard Cobden on the Scotch
Law of Entail. By a Scotch Landlord.
Inverness, 1847. 8vo. 6538. b.

1848.

Ellis (W.). A Few Questions on Secular Educa-
tion—What it is, and what it ought to be;
with an attempt to answer them. Preceded
by an Appeal to Richard Cobden, Esq., and

the members of the late Anti-Corn Law League. By the Author of "The Outlines of Social Economy" [W. Ellis]. London, 1848. 8vo. 8305. e. 82.

1849.

Phipps (E.). A few words on the three amateur budgets of Cobden, MacGregor, and Wason. London, 1849. 8vo. Pp. 24. M.F.L.

Holdfast (Harry), *pseud.* A short letter to Mr. Cobden in reply to his long speech at Manchester from his quondam admirer, Harry Holdfast. London, 1849. 8vo. 8138. d.

John Bull and his Wonderful Lamp. A new Reading of an old Tale. By Homunculus. With six [coloured] illustrations designed by the author. London, 1849. 4to. M.F.L.
—A Protectionist version of the story of Aladdin, in which "Côt-Ab-Deen the Cotton Spinner, or Côt-Abdin," plays the part of the evil magician.

1850.

Day (G. G.). Cobden's Contradictions. Extracted from Mr. G. G. Day's Letter to the "Morning Herald" of 27th March, 1850. [London, 1850.] S.sh. fol. 806. k. 15. (27.)

1852.

Somerville (Alexander). The Whistler at the

Plough and Free Trade. By Alexander Somerville, one who has whistled at the Plough. Manchester, 1852. 8vo.

An Address to Messrs. Cobden and Bright, showing their total unfitness under a monarchy, for members of Parliament, and that they are, and have long been, the greatest banes and plagues of Society. By John Bridge. Manchester [Joseph Binns Normananton], 1852. 8vo. Pp. 7.—The first page of the letter is printed as follows: "Mr. Bridge's Letter. (This Letter was originally written to the Editor of the 'Manchester Courier.') Hulme Place, Salford, June 18, 1852."

1853.

Richards (A. B.). Cobden and his pamphlet [1793 and 1853] considered, in a letter to Richard Cobden, etc. 1853. 8vo. 8138. df.

Marshall (John Clark). How Wars arise in India. Observations on Mr. Cobden's Pamphlet entitled "The Origin of the Burmese War." London, 1853. 8vo. Pp. 72. 8022. d.

— A letter to Richard Cobden in reply to "1793 and 1853." By a Manchester Man. Manchester, 1853. 8vo. 8138. f.

1854.

Cobdenic Policy the Internal Enemy of Eng-

land. The Peace Society, its combativeness, Mr. Cobden, his secretiveness. Also a narrative of historical incidents. By Alexander Somerville ("One who has whistled at the Plough"). London, 1854. 8vo. Pp. 104. M.F.L.—Somerville announced as in preparation "Cobden's Historical Errors and Prophetic Blunders," but this did not appear.

The Slanderer Exposed. A rejected letter of remonstrance to the "Manchester Courier" on its attempt to damage the Conservatives by harbouring a renegade from the Anti-Corn Law League; or a few words on Somerville and his "Cobdenic Policy." By G. F. Mandley. Manchester, Cave and Sever, 1854. 8vo. Pp. 14.

1857.

Lammer Moor, *pseud.* Bowring, Cobden, and China, etc. A memoir by Lammer Moor. Edinburgh, J. Menzies, 1857. 8vo. 8022. d.

1859.

Mr. John Bright's Speech in support of Richard Cobden, Esq. Wrigley and Son, Printers by "Steam Power," Rochdale [1859]. Four columns on demy folio fly-sheet.—This is preserved in the Election Scrap-book in the Rochdale Free Library.

1862.

Richard Cobden. *Roi des Belges*. Par un ex-colonel de la Garde civique [*i.e.* Sylvian van de Weyer]. Dédié aux Blessés de Septembre. Bruxelles, 1862. 8vo. Pp. 51.—This is reprinted in van de Weyer's "Opuscles."

1864.

Revelations from Printing House Square. Is the anonymous system a security for the Purity and Independence of the Press? A question of the "Times" newspaper. By W. Hargreaves. Second edition. London, Ridgway, 1864. 8vo. Pp. 32. 8138. b. M.F.L.—A pamphlet occasioned by the Cobden-Delane controversy. The second edition is the first with a new title-page. The author refers to the letters between Peel and Sterling.

A Richard Cobden. Contributions by Victor Froude, Emile de Girardin, Michael Chevalier, a letter from Cobden to Michael Chevalier, Napoleon III, Drouyn de Lhuys, Elias Régnault, J. Cohen, Louis Blanc, E. Levasseur, Hippolyte Passy, Joseph Garnier, Castagnary. Folio. Pp. 66, with portrait. Paris, Enoch père et fils, 1865. In possession of the family.

Ricardo Cobden, por la Asociacion Española

para la Reforma de los Aranceles de Aduanas. La Gaceta Economista. Madrid, 1865. 8vo. Pp. 188.

A Ricardo Cobden, en testimonio de respetuosa admiracion, los librecambistas españoles. Madrid, Mayo de 1865. Contents:

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1877.

Puseley (D.) and Son. The Critical Review, or, Past and Present. Demy 8vo. Pp. vi-98, containing "Cobden's Legacy." London, 1877. Written under the pseudonym of "Frank Foster."

1885.

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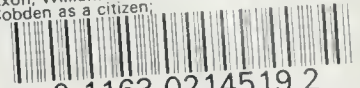
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